Class 252 H Book F28
General Theological Seminary Library
Chelsea Square, New York
v. 2

From the Library of
REVEREND AUGUSTUS VALLETTE CLARKSON
G. T. S. 1853

SERMONS

CHIEFLY

DESIGNED FOR THE USE

OF

FAMILIES,

BY JOHN FAWCETT, A. M.

Rector of Scaleby, and perpetual Curate of St. Cuthbert's, CARLISLE.

VOLUME II.

CARLISLE:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY B. SCOTT, BOOKSELLER;
AND J. RICHARDSON, 32, CORNHILL, LONDON.

1817.

GEN THEOL SEMINARY
LIBRARY

252H
F286
v.2

46376

GEN. THEO. SEMINARY
LIBRARY

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.—Luke, xvi. 8.

The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light ..... *Page* 1

SERMON II.—Romans, i. 18.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..... *Page* 19

SERMON III.—Romans i. 17.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. ..... *Page* 37

SERMON IV.—2 Corinthians, iii. 9.

For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory ..... *Page* 53

SERMON V.—Matthew, xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal..... *Page* 71

SERMON VI.—Matthew, xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal..... *Page* 89

SERMON VII.—John, vi. 68, 69.

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. ....*Page* 105

SERMON VIII.—John, vi. 68, 69.

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. .....*Page* 121

SERMON IX.—Job, xv. 14, 15, 16.

What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water? ....*Page* 137

SERMON X.—Mark, ix. 23, 24.

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.....*Page* 153

SERMON XI.—2 Timothy, iii. 14—17.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. .....*Page* 171

SERMON XII.—Exodus, xxxiv. 28, 29.

And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water: and he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, (when he came down from the Mount) that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. .....*Page* 189

SERMON XIII.—Romans, viii. 13.

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live .....*Page* 203

SERMON XIV.—Matthew, vi. 7—15.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven; Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. .....*Page* 217

SERMON XV.—Mark, v. 28.

If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole...*Page* 233

SERMON XVI.—1 Corinthians, x. 17.

For we, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. .....*Page* 249

SERMON XVII.—1 Corinthians, vii. 35.

That ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. .....*Page* 263

SERMON XVIII.—Colossians, iv. 5.

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without....*Page* 281

SERMON XIX.—1 Peter, v. 5.

Be clothed with humility.....*Page* 298

SERMON XX.—Luke, xii. 1.

Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ....*Page* 317

SERMON XXI.—Matthew, xvi. 24.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself. *Pa.*333

SERMON XXII.—Romans, xii. 21.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. *Page* 351

SERMON XXIII.—Leviticus, vi. 13.

The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out. .....*Page* 369

SERMON XXIV.—Proverbs, xxvii. 1.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. .....*Page* 385

SERMON XXV.—Proverbs, xiv. 30.

A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.....*Page* 403

SERMON XXVI.—Romans, vi. 1, 2.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? .....*Page* 419.

SERMON XXVII.—John, xvii. 4.

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.....*Page* 439

SERMON XXVIII.—Psalms, xvii. 15.

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.....*Page* 455

SERMON XXIX.—2 Peter, i. 10.

Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.*Page* 472

SERMON XXX.—Romans, ix, 22, 23.

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory .....*Page* 488

ERRATA IN VOL II.

Page 28 line 13 *for* punishments *read* punishment.
58 line 25, *for* advice *read* assistance.
67 line 13, *for* them inistration *read* the ministration.
95 line 6, *for* most *read* more.
127 line 8, *for* believed *read* believeth.
137 line 4 (in the text) *insert* his *between* in *and* saints.
141 line 14, *between* out *and* an *insert* of.
177 line 6, *for* exhortions *read* exhortations.
290 line 12 *dele* (,) *and for* or *read* on.
314 line 2, from the bottom, *for* meet *read* meek.
334 line 2 from the bottom, *for* plea *read* plan.
340 line 4 *insert* the *between* at *and* law.
354 line 11, *after* at *insert* the.
359 line 19, *after* honours *insert* him.
361 line 4, at the end *insert* the.
404 line 14, *for* which is in us lusteth unto envy *read* that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.
410 line 22, *after* mind *insert* may.
411 line 19, *for* eviable *read* enviable.
446 line 6, *after* believe *insert* on.
447 last line, *for* going *read* ready.
448 line 2, *after* fight *transpose the two next clauses.*
459 line 2 from the bottom, *for* imcompatable *read* incompatible.
475 line 13, *after* resemblance *insert* is.

PUNCTUATION.

Page 103 line 16, *dele* (;)
306 line 12, *for* (?) *insert* (.)
307 line 22, *after* proclaims *insert* (,)
341 line 4, *after* two *dele* (,) *insert it after* particularly.
460 line 3 from the bottom *for* (.) *insert* (,)
480 line 22, *dele* (,)

SERMON I.

LUKE, xvi. 8.

The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

THOUGH the remark has been often made, that the Scriptures speak but of two sorts of persons, the righteous and the wicked, the godly and the ungodly, saints and sinners, children of light and children of this world; which are various terms, all expressing the same thing. Yet so important is this distinction, that I am not deterred from again pressing it on your attention, and urging you well to consider the marks by which these several characters are described in Scripture; and to try and examine yourselves, that you may know to which description you belong.

In every comparison of these two great di-

visions of mankind, the advantage is generally on the side of the children of light. But at present we are going to compare them in a point of view in which the preference must be given to the children of this world; the wisdom of each in their respective generations. If we contemplate them in any other light, there is no comparison. The righteous excel the wicked, as much as light excelleth darkness. Their principles are incomparably more excellent, the objects which they pursue more noble, their joys more pure, their lives more useful, their deaths more peaceful, their eternity more glorious. There is one, and only one point of view, in which the preference can be given to the children of this world. They are wiser in their generation than the children of light. In forming an estimate, however, of the wisdom of each class, we must proceed with caution; that we may neither give to the worldling a praise which he does not deserve, nor condemn without reason the generation of God's children.

The children of this world are not all of them wise in their generation. There are many who are fools for both worlds, madly throwing away the comfort of this, and treasuring up for themselves an inheritance of wrath in the next. Yet it will be hard to

find, even among the most worthless and inconsiderate of mankind, one who is not outdone in folly by the wisest of God's children; if we take into consideration the proportion which ought always to be kept between the worth of the object, and the diligence of pursuit. A man is not to be accounted foolish because he does not labour hard for a thing of no worth. It is when, for want of consideration, diligence, and management, men let great things slip out of their hands, that they are justly accounted fools. And if this be the case, and we think what eternity is worth, what heaven and our souls are worth; and, on the other hand, how little satisfaction there is in any worldly thing, and how short a time it lasts; in this light, even a little diligence in a worldly man may justly shame a great deal in a spiritual man. The spiritual man may be the more diligent of the two, and yet not so diligent in proportion, nor so wise in his generation.

While, therefore, we assert on the one hand, that not all the children of this world are wise in their generation; and that many of the children of God take more pains for heavenly things, than they do for earthly; we must grant on the other, that the children of light are less wise in their generation, if their

labour is less in proportion to its object. From what has been premised it appears, that in order to form an estimate of the wisdom of the children of light, and the children of this world in their respective generations, we must

I. Consider the actual care and diligence which each employ.

II. Contemplate that care and diligence, in connexion with the object of pursuit.

I. With respect to the children of this world; whatever degree of vice and folly may be in the world, yet there is consideration and industry enough for carrying on the various concerns of it with sufficient activity and success. And they are comparatively few among mankind, who decline the hardships, the labours, the fatigues, or dangers, which are necessary to ensure success in their respective occupations.

What self-denial, what courage, what exertion for instance is needful for a man to discharge his duty creditably, and obtain promotion as a sailor! He must leave his tenderest and dearest connexions, must brave every climate and every season, and be familiar with the danger of death. Yet to do all this is no extraordinary merit; we see it done every day, and frequently with such amazing instances of resolution and perseverance, as almost

to surpass belief. What tedious marchings, what painful watchings, what desperate conflicts, has the soldier to undergo in the course of a campaign, and in the field of battle! Yet all this is constantly done by almost every soldier; nor do we wonder at those who atchieve these things as persons of extraordinary resolution; but rather consider those who shrink from them, as failing to quit themselves like men.

Nor is it only in the profession of arms that men shew how steadily they can pursue, through every obstacle, the object which they set before them; but in the counting-house of the merchant, in the shop of the tradesman, in the chamber of the student, we may trace the same patience, assiduity, and exertion. Men see that a little self-denial for the present is the road to many comforts in after years, and have worldly wisdom enough to undergo it for that end.

What has been said may be enough to shew, in general, how wise in their generation the children of this world are; but we may note a few particulars in which their wisdom is displayed.

They make every thing give way to the great object. The tradesman may love company; but he will not, for the sake of it, leave

his shop or his counting-house: business is deemed a sufficient apology for declining such invitations as may interfere with its demands upon his time. They are also too wise to barter away a greater good for a less. And further, they do not trifle with their business itself; they do not think it enough to be employed; they study how their pains may best conduce to a certain end; and they go to that end by the surest and shortest road.

I wish the children of light may make as good a figure in their generation.

I trust there are some who are soldiers, diligently fighting the Lord's battles, warring a good warfare; merchantmen seeking goodly pearls, and wise enough to sell all that they have for the pearl of great price; skilful traffickers improving well their talent, and laying up treasures in heaven; husbandmen who carefully dress the Lord's vineyard, and render him the fruits in due season. Yet, even among these, I fear we shall find few whose wisdom in their generation will not fall short of the wisdom of the children of this world in several important particulars.

As, for instance,

There are few who do not let impertinent things interfere with their hours of retirement, and seasons of devotion. The tradesman will

excuse himself; business calls, it must be attended to. And must not prayer be attended to? Must the business between God and thy soul, O Christian, be suspended for every trifle? What tradesman would grow rich, who conducted his worldly affairs so? And canst thou be rich in faith, and grow vigorously in the divine life, when thy spiritual concerns are so slothfully managed? Yet he is an eminent Christian whose heart can bear him witness, that this is never the case; but that his determined diligence in waiting upon God, is a fair counterpart of the plodding tradesman's resolute attention; that sloth does never indispose him, nor unwatchfulness betray; that the flesh never seduces, nor cares distract, nor trifles discompose; but that day after day finds him steadily working out his salvation with fear and trembling, without intermission, and without fainting.

Again, there are few of the children of light, who do not, in a greater or less degree, err; in not going, like the tradesman, the surest and shortest way to the attainment of their object. The tradesman does not lose his time by talking about commerce, and learning theories of trade, but gives his time to actual business; but too many serious Christians spend a great deal of time in read-

ing religious books, and debating religious questions, when they should be employed in reducing what they read, or converse of, to practice. They talk and read about faith, but where is their believing? They debate about good works, but where is their fruitfulness? They might know, that it is not reading many books, much less unprofitable talk, which is the way to thrive in godliness; but praying much, and searching the Scriptures, and applying to practice what they do hear and read, and taking up their cross daily in active duty. The tradesman's question respecting any scheme that he adopts, is not, is it pleasant? is it popular? is it new? but will it help me to make my fortune? So, if the spiritual man were equally wise in his generation, his question respecting any religious book to which he gives his time, or company that he meets; would not be, is it entertaining? is it ingenious? is it much admired? But, will it profit my soul? Does it contain food by which I may grow and thrive? May I expect to find in it, what will humble my pride, check my presumption, correct my judgment, purify my affections; or what will remove my fears, answer my doubts, strengthen my faith, provoke my love, and teach me how to mortify my lusts? Perhaps these considerations

may suggest another particular in which the children of light may find themselves outdone in wisdom by the children of this world. It is, however, pleasing to reflect, that the religious books which are most in request, are books of the best kind: plain, scriptural, and searching.

Such, on a survey of what is really done by the children of this world, and the children of light; seems a just estimate of their comparative wisdom in their respective generations.

II. But if, as was in the second place proposed, we view the subject in connection with the worth of the objects which they pursue; the truth of the text will be still more evident and striking.

If the worldly man were to be less wise in his generation; if he were to say, I will eat and drink, for to-morrow I die; if he were to enjoy the present, regardless of the future; and if the consequence should be poverty and want; yet, considering this life only, it would not be so great folly as that of a child of light neglecting his inheritance. For, though he would smart for his folly, it would but be for a season; his days of suffering might be many, but they would have an end. And in the grave, the wise man and the fool are both alike. *That* would have been the end of all,

if he had laboured and shewn himself wise under the sun. He could not have avoided death, nor rendered his possessions perpetual. The folly which sacrifices things so transient, though it be folly, may yet be excused. But what shall we say to that folly which trifles with things eternal, and forfeits an increase of glory which can never be recovered through eternity!

When I reflect what it is that worldly men are toiling for, and what it is that saints are labouring for; I think the diligence of the most active servants of God needs to be reproved. They should be ashamed that the greatness of the object which they have in view does not stir them up to such exertions as should excel all that we see done from worldly motives, for worldly ends. What! shall a little applause from men, the perishing breath of a vain worm, kindle in the breasts of warriors, statesmen, and men of letters, such a fire of ambition as rouses them to the most laborious exertions, and the most dangerous enterprises? And shall the favour of God, that honour which cometh from him, be sought after by the Christian with less ardour of desire; with less vehemence of holy ambition? Shall the heaping together of a little gold and silver, treasures which must

leave a man, and which make him not happy while they last, be esteemed a sufficient object for such painful application, such unwearied assiduity, as we often see? And shall the unsearchable riches of Christ be sought after with such a listless attention, as if they were soon told, and hardly worth labouring for? Should not these, the only true, satisfying, lasting riches; be sought with an eagerness of pursuit which leaves behind it even the insatiableness of avarice itself? Shall the merchant labour for his gain; shall the soldier toil for honour; shall the student apply for knowledge; shall even the drunkard, or fornicator, watch and labour for opportunities and means of gratifying his beastly lust? And shall not the Christian give tenfold diligence for unsearchable riches; for glory, honour, and immortality; for substantial wisdom, and pleasures, at God's right-hand for evermore?

Again, the more danger there is of loss from negligence, the greater is the folly of being unwatchful. It requires more care to manage a vessel at sea, than to travel on firm ground. The sailor uses more caution and labour in a storm, than when all move smoothly with a prosperous wind; and he traverses the seas with more circumspec-

tion in a time of war, when he may be met by the armed force of the enemy, than is necessary in peace. If this is the case, what circumspection, what care, would the Christian, if he were wise, exert! The dangers which attend a traveller, or a sailor; the perils of robbers, and perils of waters; are nothing compared with the dangers which surround the spiritual warrior, and beset the pilgrim who is travelling towards heaven: perils from false brethren, perils from a seducing world, perils from a treacherous heart, and perils from the great adversary, the devil; who, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. What! are our precious souls in such continual danger; our heavenly inheritance exposed to such dreadful risks? And do we sit quiet and secure, as if all were safe, and there were no world to seduce, no flesh to betray, and no devil to tempt and ruin our souls? May it not be said to us as the mariners said to Jonah: "awake, O sleeper, and call upon thy God?" Is not carelessness in such circumstances a folly unparalleled in the conduct of worldly men?

There is a further reason why the children of light ought to be wiser in their generation, than the children of this world; and that is,

they have such manifold opportunities and advantages. Not only are their snares and dangers many, and consequently unwatchfulness is inexcusable folly; but their opportunities of proficiency are also more numerous and more certain. The worldly man has to watch his opportunities, and sometimes he watches in vain; times and chances are so much against him, that no care, no diligence, no management, can command success. After his utmost and most prudent exertions, a loss at sea, a bad sale, or the failure of others with whom he is connected in trade, may bring on the inevitable ruin of his fortunes. Not so the Christian: every circumstance and event afford him means of improvement and opportunities of spiritual benefit; by misfortunes he may learn patience; by successes, gratitude; riches he may employ to the glory of God; in poverty he may honour him by contentment. And as all things work together for good, to them that love God; so there is nothing which may not prove an occasion for the exercise of Christian wisdom, in discerning and drawing out the blessing which it conveys.

A few words of application shall conclude what has been said.

1. And first to the children of this world.

It is true, it is said in the text, that you are wiser in your generation; but it is not said that your generation is wiser. The things that you do pursue, you pursue wisely; but you are not wise in pursuing them. You pursue them wisely, and you attain them; but when you have got them, what can they do for you? Riches do not content, honours do not satisfy you; you are still restless, still craving, still poor, helpless, and miserable; exposed to every stroke of fortune. And where will all this wisdom end? O, death! how terrible art thou to him that is at ease in his possessions! With what demonstration dost thou teach the vanity of worldly wisdom! And how many who were wise in this world, now lifting up their eyes in torments, see that all their wisdom was folly, and wish they had been but half as wise in spiritual things, as they were in earthly! O, my dear brethren, how shall I shew you the superior excellency of God's children! It is true, they are not so wise in their generation; but they are a wiser generation. The things which they choose they do not pursue so wisely as you do; but they choose better. You run for a corruptible crown, they for an incorruptible; you strive for perishing treasures, they for an eternal inheritance; your pursuit is more dis-

tracted, theirs more simple; you have a great many persons to please, if they please God it is enough; you have many cares, they have none, for they cast them upon God; your course is intricate and difficult, because you have many things to attend to; theirs is plain and simple, for they have only one thing, duty. Your death; for death must come, is dark, joyless, terrible; theirs peaceful, happy, triumphant! Oh! would we know how much better the wisdom of the children of light is, than that of the children of this world; we should see it on a death-bed. The death-bed of the child of this world, how insensible in general, sometimes how frightful! The death-bed of the child of light, how serene, how joyful! The faithful Christian standing on the verge of time, and just entering on his rest, in a blissful eternity; has a foretaste of the glory to be revealed, and teaches energetically to all around him, the wisdom of choosing that good part which shall not be taken away from him.

2. And to you, children of light, what word of exhortation shall I offer? What, but that with all diligence you emulate the wisdom of the children of this world. In order to your doing this, seek to have your minds more and more impressed with the excellency of your

choice in pursuing eternal things. The world is always ready to wear out the impression; it is always endeavouring to stamp on the heart a sense of its own importance; and the credulous heart is ever ready to believe it. Every talent you possess will be a snare to you, if you are not watchful; riches, learning, reputation, friends. The more you live in these things, the greater danger you are in of looking on the cross of Christ as a weak and foolish thing. Beware, pray, watch; consider how soon all these things which beguile your heart by a false show of worth, will be as though they had never been! And shall such things appear great to one who has known Christ? God forbid! No; let the world judge as it will, and admire what it will; but let me ever esteem all gain, loss; all wisdom, folly; all honour, meanness; in comparison of the unsearchable riches, and excellent knowledge, and incomparable glory of Christ. May he and his salvation always appear to me inestimably precious, and all things else in comparison worthless. And thus let me learn to follow, with daily increasing diligence, the attainment of his image, and the promoting of his glory! Let me study all the rules and methods of holy living which the Scriptures and prayer suggest. Let me make so wise

an use of my time, talents, and substance, that all may turn to my account in eternity!

Oh, that we may be all thus minded, to walk as children of the light, and to endeavour to be as wise in our generation as the children of this world are in theirs!

SERMON II.

ROMANS, i. 18.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

IN the verse immediately preceeding the text, the apostle declares that in the gospel, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith." The connexion in which the text follows, is such as to intimate, that the necessity of this righteousness which the gospel witnesses arose from the state of wrath in which it found a guilty world; which wrath was, in various ways, fully revealed; and was necessary, in the first place, to be understood, before the gospel could be duly prized, or received to saving purposes.

The revelation of wrath, then, and the re-

velation of righteousness, being that complete discovery of the divine character and purpose, which is sufficient to bring men from a state of sin and death, to life and peace; it is my design to set each of them forth in a separate discourse, taking for our present subject the revelation of God's wrath against sin. And may that spirit, whose office it is to convince both of sin and of righteousness, be with us; and with effectual demonstration convey what shall be spoken on each subject to the heart!

The text declares, that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

In considering this, I will endeavour to shew,

I. The various method and ample certainty of the revelation of God's wrath against sin.

II. The extent of the object against which it is directed.

I. The wrath of God against sin is revealed in various ways, with different degrees of certainty.

It is revealed in the works of God, and even there not obscurely. All men see that the works of God do testify of him, and proclaim his perfections and character. Who that sees the sun rise at his command, and the stars obey his will; or contemplates the bound

which he has set to the sea, staying its proud waves by the sand which it can never pass; can for a moment doubt his *power?* Or, who that observes how fearfully and wonderfully his own frame is made, and the inexhaustible variety of admirable contrivances which every where are seen for the increase and preservation of the animal and vegetable world; can for an instant doubt the *wisdom* of him who made all these things? Or again, when we see how God opens his hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing; how the earth is stored with plenty, not only for the sustenance, but also for the ease, comfort, and delight of men; can we help seeing that God is *good?* Thus God leaves not himself without witness, doing us good, and giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; filling our hearts with food and gladness.

And these marks of wisdom, power, and goodness, which God imprints on his works, men in general *do* see; but they do not see the revelation of his wrath against sin, though this is written on the face of creation in characters scarcely less visible. The tokens of his righteous displeasure are neither few, nor hard to be understood. The scourges of war, pestilence, and famine, with which he from time to time visits different parts of the world,

prove it. The innumerable tribes of diseases, under one or other of which most of the individuals of our own species labour, declare it. And the penalty of death rigorously exacted on all that live on the earth, loudly proclaims that, together with sin, wrath is entered into the world.

The proof will become still more evident, if we consider that many of these evils which in one common visitation are inflicted on a world of sinners, are hastened or increased in the case of more heinous offenders; or new sufferings added, the direct and natural consequence of their transgression. Riot and excess, drunkenness and lasciviousness, bring on their own punishment in debility and painful diseases; and other vices there are which provide for themselves their own chastisement so evidently, that he who denies that God is a punisher of sin, must invent a new definition of punishment; for either he must say, that pain, sickness, disgrace, and premature death, are no evils; or, that sufferings inflicted in consequence of sin, are not punishments.

It being thus evident, that God is a punisher of sin in this world, it is reasonable to expect, that he will maintain the same character in the next; and this most reasonable conclusion is fully confirmed by his word. How-

ever probable our conjectures may be, or even however certain our conclusions, we are not left to them. We have the certainty of God's own word, his express declaration. The Scriptures uniformly reveal him to us as a righteous judge, who will render to every man according to his works; as a jealous God, who will not suffer the majesty of his law to be dishonoured with impunity; as a holy God, who will not behold iniquity, and who hates all the workers thereof; as a terrible God, with whom there is no contending; as a consuming fire, devouring up the adversaries; as a God who cannot lie, and who has yet declared that the wicked shall be cast into hell; and that he will take vengeance in flaming fire on them that know him not, and obey not the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. Declarations to this effect, as clear and express as they are numerous, are to be met with in every part of the Bible; so that the wrath of God against sin is not a thing which we are left darkly to apprehend, but which we may know with perfect certainty.

Thus is this awful truth witnessed, both by the course of Providence, and the word of revelation. The former testimony is what the apostle has immediately in view in the

text, and is very important, as serving to silence cavillers who will dispute against the Scriptures, but cannot reject the testimony of undeniable facts. Still the most clear and satisfactory testimony to every fair mind, is the declaration of God himself, which is so decisive on the subject, that no words can be found more express respecting the certainty and duration of future punishments. Everlasting punishment, a worm which dieth not, a fire which is not quenched. Can we doubt the meaning of these awful words? And is God true, and to be depended upon; or is he not, that such terrible denunciations produce so little effect, and that so few tremble at the word of God?

There is yet a further revelation of God's wrath against sin, which he makes, not indeed without the word, but by the word; and that is, by his Spirit in the conscience of sinners, convincing them of sin, and filling them with dreadful apprehensions of the wrath to come. This, indeed, is not the proper evidence of that wrath, either to others or to those that have it; but surely it is a very powerful confirmation of that word which reveals it. What they feel is a fore-taste of that vengeance which the word denounces;

how then can they doubt, but that the full measure of it will be poured out, at last upon impenitent sinners?

Thus much for the undoubted certainty of that wrath of God, which will be executed on the ungodly in the day of judgment.

II. Let us now consider the extent of the object against which this wrath is directed: all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. There is nothing that can be called ungodliness, or unrighteousness, against which this wrath does not burn. Whatever men say or do that is ungodly, they treasure up for themselves a portion of this heavy wrath. They do it when they mention the name of God in idle and vain discourse. They do it when they profane his sabbaths. And, though there are works of mercy and necessity which a man may do on the sabbath, and be blameless; yet we must not imagine that every appointment of man can set aside the commandment of God, or that we sin securely when we sin with the multitude. Again, all acts of injustice expose those who do them to this wrath. If any man "go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter; the Lord is the avenger of all such;" God will judge also all whoremongers, and adulterers. Nay, "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give

account thereof in the day of judgment; for God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Enough has been said for the proof and explanation of this plain subject. There is no description of characters whom it does not one way or other concern; but I would particularly wish to apply it to three classes: those who are living in gross sin; those who are at ease in a course of worldliness, and formality; and those who are convinced of sin, and are desirous of fleeing from the wrath to come.

1. Let me address those who are living in sin without fear, careless about the displeasure of God, and not regarding the power of his wrath.

What are you doing, O wicked men? What is it that makes you so bold in sin; so daring in your rebellion against God? The real truth is, that you would fain not believe either his being or his judgments; and in fact you do half disbelieve both. You say in your heart, "there is no God;" or you say, "tush! thou God seest not; thou God carest not for it." There are two things which support your confidence in your course of sin: a secret infidelity, which takes off the

force and efficacy of the declaration of divine vengeance contained in Scripture; and the love of sin, which makes you glad to have it so, and disposes your heart to unbelief. If you were not in some measure sincere in your infidelity; if you did not harbour some secret hope, that the Scriptures do not speak the truth respecting the purpose of God; you durst not thus trifle, you durst not thus rebel, and run the prodigious risk of everlasting ruin. And if the love of sin did not strongly incline you to such unbelief, you could not fail of being convinced by the plain proofs of the divine character, and God's own express and positive declarations of what he intends to do. Let the love of sin stand aside for a moment, and what is there which infidelity can answer to the plain considerations that have been offered? Give over listening to inclination, to your hopes and wishes, and you must be constrained to believe. I know you have not one good reason to give, why you should doubt that God will punish sinners in hell. Even now, you cannot but believe it; but because you love sin, therefore you love darkness, and are glad to seek a refuge from the painful fears of hell in that false peace which an unbelieving heart too easily affords. But if you can cease to fear,

and to be uneasy; can you therefore cease to be actually in danger? Will your carelessness or unbelief render the wrath of God less real or less heavy? Alas, no! though you slumber, your damnation slumbereth not; and though you linger, your judgment lingereth not.

"Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Consider the present pains and troubles that attend thy sin; are not these proofs that God is angry with thee, and earnests of the punishments which he will inflict on thee hereafter? Call to mind the misgivings of conscience which thou hast occasionally felt in times of sickness, and in the prospect of approaching dissolution; or when the terrors of the Lord have been plainly and faithfully laid before thee in the preaching of his word. Has not thy heart then frequently sunk within thee; and has not thy conscience borne witness for God, and seconded the declarations of his word? Perhaps then thou didst promise to turn to God, and for the future to keep his commandments; and why was the wholesome conviction lost, or the wise purpose abandoned? Why hast thou again turned back to folly; and why dost thou go on to seek death in the error of thy ways?

Oh! repent before it be too late. Eternity is near. The Judge standeth before the door. Thy sins unpardoned are on thy head. Make haste and flee from the vengeance of the Almighty, lest wrath come upon thee to the uttermost.

Oh! that I could by any means persuade thee, or lay before thee with sufficient earnestness and conviction, the misery of thy case. Thou art a creature of God, yet alienated from him; living under his government, yet in rebellion against him; following sinful pleasures, which bring thee no present fruit, and will draw down upon thee future vengeance. Can any condition be worse than to have God for an enemy? Yet this, sinner, is thine. Yes, God is against thee! And what canst thou do against omnipotence incensed; "will thine hands be strong, or can thine heart endure, when God shall deal with thee?" Let me entreat thee, then, to take warning: delay not, look not behind thee, haste, flee for thy life. What dost thou say? Wilt thou leave thy sinful companions, and sinful courses? Wilt thou no longer countenance the profane jest, nor the licentious song, nor run into the same excess of riot as heretofore? Oh! if, through divine grace and strength, thou standest stedfast in this purpose, there will be joy

in heaven among the angels of God on thy account. But are the dear delights too sweet to be parted with? Canst thou not stand the shame of becoming wise unto salvation, which is folly in the world's esteem? Must peace and heaven be foregone for thy mad lusts? And must thy pleasures be pursued, even though they lead thee down to hell? If death, and judgment, and eternity, and wrath, have no weight, I can say no more. I can only mourn over thy perverseness, and take my leave in the words of Solomon: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

I have hitherto been speaking to those who live in the allowed indulgence of notoriously sinful pleasures, or in the practice of dishonest arts. But these are not the only persons against whom the wrath of God is revealed from heaven. Some men's sins are open before-hand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. There is another description of men whose sins are more decent, but hardly less abominable in the sight of God. "A generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthi-

ness." These are harder to convince than more flagrantly wicked characters; and often publicans, and harlots, and prodigals, enter into the kingdom of heaven sooner than they. But I would address to such a few words of affectionate remonstrance.

My brethren, the wrath of God is revealed against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Why should you confine the denunciations of it to degrees and kinds of sin, to which the Scripture does not confine them. I can find no such limit in the word of God. There I see that God will judge thieves, and adulterers, and fornicators, and drunkards; and not these only, but also the covetous, the proud, the deceitful, the hard-hearted, the unforgiving, the formal. God will call you into judgment for your frequent neglect of his sabbath, for your inattention to family and private devotion, for unkindness to relations, for rash anger, for hasty words, for impure thoughts, for worldly affections; for all these he will not only call you into judgment, but make you see and feel that for these things his wrath is upon you. Does it not become a holy God to take notice of these things? Depend upon it he will. And there is one thing for which, particularly, he has a quarrel against you; and that is because, though in

all these things you offend continually, yet you say you are pure; in heart, at least, you say so; you consider yourselves as righteous, and despise the prodigal; whereas the chief difference between you is, that he says "I will not go;" and you say, "I go, Sir," but go not.

Consider; if you fulfilled the law, you should live to the glory of God at all times. Whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do; you should do all to the glory of God. Have you done all this? No; and the evil is, that you have not only like other men, sinned and come short of glorifying God, and of fulfilling the law; but you have not learnt that from the law which it is the design of God that all the world should learn from it; viz. "that every mouth may be stopped, and that all the world may become guilty before God." Because you say we see, therefore your sin remaineth; and because you say you are righteous, the wrath of God remaineth on you. Yes! you also have need to flee from the wrath to come. Let me entreat you to give up your fatal imagination, that there is no wrath against you, and your vain confidence in your own righteousness; submit yourselves in time to the righteousness of God; and seek to be found in Christ, "not having your own

righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

And now let me, in conclusion, address a few words to those whose wounded spirits tremble at the word of God; and who are awed by the apprehension of his wrath. You believe the revelation of God's wrath: it appears to you, not only a certain thing, but also a righteous thing, that God should recompense vengeance to his enemies. You have no quarrel with the law of God as too strict, nor with the judgment of God as too severe; all your quarrel is with yourselves, and your own deceitful hearts. For you we have words of comfort and refreshment. I cannot now explain, at large, the gospel salvation to which you are invited; this is what I purpose to do, in the discoursing on the revelation of God's righteousness. But let me observe to you, that there is righteousness as well as sin; that the great design, and end of the gospel is, to testify of this righteousness; and if it testifies of sin, and reveals wrath, it is only to clear the way for the glorious and comfortable revelation of God's righteousness, or his way of justifying and saving sinners freely by his grace. Now the preparatory conviction has been wrought in you; whole-

some, though painful lesson! But it is enough. Dwell not now upon your sins; look no longer at the wrath of God; you have another lesson to learn: henceforth you are to hear of mercy and grace, and of the love of God abounding to sinners in his Son Jesus Christ. Learn to obtain and preserve peace of conscience; learn to rejoice in God; learn to exchange your apprehensions of wrath, for prospects of glory. O, mourning Christians! great and glorious things, joyful and blessed things, are before you; and I am loth to detain you from the delightful contemplation of these comforting truths; but what remains of our time suffices not for a due examination of them. Meanwhile, take for your comfort the following considerations.

God is not more terrible to his enemies, than he is in his own nature loving; and through the covenant of grace, actually favourable to those who seek him in his appointed way. As his majesty is, so is his mercy. Further, the promises and encouragements of the gospel are addressed, as it were, by name to those who mourn like you. Hear how the Saviour speaks: "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And for what did Christ come, but to comfort them that mourn.

and to bind up the broken-hearted. He himself pronounces you blessed: "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." And the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity says, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Is not this large encouragement for you? Be assured, you are not straitened in God. If you only understand that righteousness which his gospel reveals, you will perceive that it is not without reason that St. John says, "God is love." You shall yourselves, with unspeakable joy, know him by that delightful name; and shall see, that though painful, yet it was also profitable, to have once known him as a consuming fire!

SERMON III.

ROMANS, i. 17.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

THERE is a perfect harmony between the Old Testament and the New. The doctrine of both is the same. One glorious system begins in the one, and is completed in the other. What in the first Testament is obscurely hinted, is in the last clearly revealed: and the most important truths of the gospel are not the destruction, but the fulfilment of the law and the prophets. If any one would be convinced of this, let him consider how frequently we find, both from our Lord and his apostles,

the words "as it is written," "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled," with other expressions of the same import.

Among the many intimations of gospel grace, and the true way of salvation, to be met with in the Old Testament; there are few more express than that of the prophet Habakkuk, quoted in the text: a passage of such importance, as to be referred to no less than three times by the writers of the New Testament. The prophet declares, that the just shall live by faith; but to shew *how* the just shall live by faith, distinctly to explain the nature and method of this justification and life, exceeds the prophet's commission. This is the subject of the New Testament; this is its peculiar glory. It is this which makes the apostle say, in the words just before the text, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;" by which he means, that he is proud of it, and glories in it; as he says in his epistle to the Galatians, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And every one who understands aright this blessed gospel, and is acquainted with that righteousness of God by faith which it reveals, will be of his mind; and, far from being ashamed of the gospel,

will esteem it his peculiar glory, as well as his chief joy.

Before I proceed to state my subject, the text will require a brief explanation. The words are, "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." The passage is variously interpreted. The difficulty lies in the words, from faith to faith; which some understand to mean, from the faithfulness of God revealing, to the faith of man receiving. Others explain it, from one degree of faith to another; i. e. either from Old Testament faith in a Christ to come, to New Testament faith in a Christ already come; or, from the first faith whereby we receive Christ, to after faith by which we walk in him.

None of these interpretations give a bad sense; but there is another which much more satisfactorily approves itself to my mind, as conveying the real meaning of the apostle, which is this. The righteousness of God is revealed, *from* or rather *by* faith to faith: i. e. the righteousness of God which is by faith, is revealed to our faith. The first faith characterizes the nature of God's righteousness; which is not of debt, but of grace; not of works, but of faith. The latter shows to what it is revealed, viz. to faith, in order that it may be believed. This interpretation, which

is confirmed by the most natural rendering of the original text, suggests the just division of our subject.

I. The righteousness of God by faith revealed in Scripture.

II. The import and instruction of its being revealed to faith.

Righteousness, in the Scripture use of the word, is that in which a man, appearing before his judge, will be accepted of him. The righteousness which men naturally seek, is of themselves, and by works; that which the gospel reveals is of God, and by faith. To understand this contrast, is to understand the gospel, and the righteousness which it reveals. The righteousness which is of man, is a very imperfect righteousness in every point of view: it does not fulfil the law, even in outward act; much less does it in inward principle. At best, it is very unworthy of God's acceptance; and what there is good in it, not going a jot beyond a man's bounden duty, can make no satisfaction for sin. There is nothing in it which can at all make it a meet and suitable thing, that a holy God should accept a sinner. Further, being a righteousness of works, it is also of debt, not of grace; and the man who is so justified, hath whereof to glory.

Such is the righteousness which human reason deviseth: it giveth not glory to God, and bringeth not salvation to man; it does not humble the sinner, it does not exalt the Saviour.

Now contemplate that righteousness which the gospel revealeth. It is of God, and it is worthy of God. It is a perfect righteousness, the absolute fulfilment of the law in every point. It is the obedience of one who was in dignity God; in nature, man. It is an obedience unto death, the death of God's own Son; who offered himself up, as a lamb without spot, to be a sacrifice for sin. It is a righteousness effectual to purge the conscience, and to take away the remembrance and imputation of sin. Concerning Christ, the author and finisher of it, it was foretold by the prophet Daniel, that he should "finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness." It is through the intervention of this righteousness that God can be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. The way is made clear, the objections from his justice and holiness are removed, and God can manifest himself to the believing sinner in his character of love.

Further, this righteousness which is of God,

is also of faith. It is of faith, that it might be by grace; and hence results a double advantage.

An advantage to the sinner himself. The promise not standing now on the will or faithfulness of man, but on the truth of God, is thus made sure to all the believing seed. This righteousness, with all the benefits included in it, hangs not suspended on the performance of any hazardous conditions; but is freely and fully conferred on every one that believeth; so that, by one large and generous act of grace, he is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. Amazing benefit! how advantageous is it to man that the righteousness of God's appointment is of faith, not of works!

This dispensation redounds also to the greater glory of God. What attribute of God is there which is not honoured by this divinely wise and glorious design? His wisdom is manifested, his truth displayed, his justice exemplified; but most of all, his love shines forth with a mid-day blaze of glory. Thus the righteousness revealed in the gospel is at once peace and good-will to men on earth, and glory to God in the highest.

II. The righteousness of God by faith revealed in the gospel being explained, I pro-

ceed in the second place to state: what instruction is to be derived from the declaration that it is revealed to faith.

Why was it not enough to say, that in the gospel the righteousness of God by faith is revealed? Why should we further be told, that it is revealed to faith? Is it not that faith and the word have a mutual correspondence and relation to each other? Faith is the proper recipient of the word, and the word the right object of faith; faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Faith and the word are mutually connected together, and by the one is the other made perfect; so that neither is the word any thing without faith, nor faith any thing without the word. Without faith, the word is unprofitable; without the word, faith is unwarranted. The word, without faith, is a dead letter; faith, without the word, a blind confidence. If then we would have the word profitable to our souls, we must mix faith with the word. If we would have our faith solid and free from delusions, we must confine it to the word.

Each of these particulars is important enough to be considered more at large.

The word profits not, unless it be mixed with faith in them that hear it. However precious the word be in itself, and on account

of the rich blessings which it reveals; if it be not received with faith, it is of no avail. It is to no purpose that God offers to sinners a divine righteousness, by which they may be justified freely, without price, and fully, from all things; and declares that this righteousness is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, if men will not believe. It is in vain that God sets forth his son Jesus Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood, if men will not exercise faith in his blood. O, the unspeakable evils of unbelief! It makes Christ to have died in vain, and renders the promise of God of none effect; shuts out the exercise of mercy, and keeps the souls of men under condemnation, and abiding in death. Yet how many in every place thus dishonour the truth of God, destroy the efficacy of his word, and ruin their own souls! When was the time, or where the place, in which the ministers of God's word had not, in a greater or less degree, to complain, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" I trust in this place there are some who believe the word; who experience the peace of God, and rejoice in the hope of glory. But are there not many who do not believe, but are living at the same distance from God as

if he had never published the message of reconciliation: as perfect strangers to the covenants of promise, as void of hope, and as completely without God in the world, as if he had never offered them pardon and life through his son Jesus Christ? Alas! my brethren, you do not believe the gospel; and I am bound to say to you, that the word without faith is not only unprofitable, but that the sin of not believing the word is one of the greatest of sins. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, and shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

And it is further to be lamented, that many not only do not believe the word, but will believe what is not warranted by the word. As our Lord said to the Jews, "I am come to you in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." Even so now there are many like the Jews, who desire a sign, and neglect the word of God. How many groundless conceits, proud fancies, and lying inventions, have been falsely called by the name of faith! Many being firmly persuaded of what the word never told them, have fancied themselves strong in the faith, and measured the strength of their faith by the positiveness of

their persuasion, and not by the clearness with which they apprehended the divine testimony. There is nothing which it is faith for a man to believe, till he is sure that God has revealed it in his word. As soon as a thing is clearly made out to you to be contained in the word of God, then it is faith to believe it; but not till then. As soon as you are sure that God has said the thing which you believe, then your faith rests on the faithfulness and truth of God, who cannot lie; but till then it has nothing to rest upon but the word of man, the experiences of others, or uncertain and delusive feelings.

Remember then, my brethren, at all times to ground your faith on the word of God; the faith that is thus grounded is satisfying, reasonable, calm, natural in its exercise, stable, progressive. The man who thus believes, has tried his ground, and is convinced that it will bear him. He can give a reason of the hope that is in him. It is a faith which is not sustained or expressed in ordinary cases by violent efforts or agitations. Though a supernatural grace, yet the exercise of it is in the simple and easy use of our natural faculties, apprehending and receiving divine truth. Though subject to variations, and always keeping its proportion to other graces with

which it is inseparably combined ; yet it depends not on the flow of animal spirits, nor does it sink or rise with our worse or better frames ; but, looking out of and beyond ourselves, to the unchangeable word and truth of God, as it apprehends more of that, it waxes stronger and stronger, till at last it is lost in sight, when the believer is safely landed where faith and hope exist no more, but love only abideth.

We have seen now what is the righteousness revealed in the gospel ; viz. a righteousness which is of God by faith. We have seen also with what propriety we are further told, that it is revealed to faith ; as St. John says, "these things are written that ye might believe." It remains that we apply what has been said.

In my last discourse I set forth the terrors of the Lord, and endeavoured to convince you of the certainty of God's wrath against sin. The object of my present discourse has been to instruct you in the nature of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, and to point out the proper ground on which you are to rest your faith. If, through the divine blessing, I have succeeded in this, I trust a far more important object is attained, than if I had excited some temporary meltings or

warmth of affection, without laying a sufficient foundation of doctrinal knowledge. It is true, knowledge without affection is little better than affection without knowledge; but here is the proper order, knowledge first and affection following, naturally excited by the glory of the object seen and apprehended.

Do you understand, my brethren, and are you convinced of the truths that have been delivered? You, who were late so broken in spirit, and trembling at the word of God; do you now see that the gospel contains no less clearly a revelation of righteousness, than the law contains a revelation of wrath? Do you see also, clearly and certainly, that this righteousness is of God's own appointing; divine, glorious, satisfying, infinite; and, to crown all, free; a gift unincumbered, offered to sinners without money, and without price? What can you want more to change your mourning into joy? No comfortable feelings which you can have, without the word, can furnish a reasonable ground, on which you may build your peace and hope. It is the word that reveals the righteousness of God by faith, and reveals it that you may believe and be saved. O, then, pray for such a lively and steadfast faith, that you may see so clearly the love and mercy of God, the grace of

Christ, the sufficiency of his sacrifice, the value of his righteousness, the freeness of his salvation; and so distinctly exercise faith in him, that you may be fully assured that he both receives and will save you to the uttermost. As St. Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

If you remain yet in doubt and fear, it is through unbelief. Why do you fear? because you believe the declaration of wrath. And why do you not rejoice, but because you do not believe the message of reconciliation? You desire to be reconciled to God: God says he is reconciled. Hear his word: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Still you say, how shall I know that God is reconciled to me: that my sins in particular are pardoned and blotted out? See to what characters the promises are made—to the weary and heavy laden, to those who tremble at God's word, to them that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Is this your character? Then set to your seal that God is true. Appropriate the blessing as your own. Believe for yourself in the Son of God. As long as your faith in him is weak and indistinct, it

cannot be expected that it should be evidenced by its own exercise, or convey immediate comfort to the soul. But when it becomes lively and vigorous, and apprehends Christ distinctly; then it is discerned by its own light, and brings along with it peace and joy unspeakable. Seek, then, to know daily more and more of Christ. You may be ever learning, yet there will always remain enough to be learnt of that grace which is unsearchable, and of that love which passeth knowledge. The word also, if you duly attend to it, will teach you how to try your faith by its fruits, and thus prevent the most dangerous and disgraceful delusions.

Let me then, before I turn to other characters, entreat you, penitent sinners, thus to proceed: keep your eye on the word, seek to increase in the knowledge of Christ, fly to him continually, endeavour to cast your sins on him; and in proportion as you are enabled to do this, you will find rest to your souls.

Lastly, let me observe to all, that the gospel being the revelation of righteousness is exceedingly glorious; and that therefore far from being ashamed of it, we should esteem it our glory and our boast. Every thing that proceeds from God is glorious. Even the ministration of condemnation was glorious; how

much more, then, must the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory; that was glorious, as it displayed the holiness and justice of God; this glorious, as it discovers not his holiness and justice only, but also his wisdom, love, and mercy. That while it glorified God, worked wrath to man. This both glorifies God, and brings to man salvation. And shall we be ashamed of that gospel which reveals God in the most endearing light, and exhibits man in his best and happiest state; which brings the joyful news of death abolished, the grave vanquished, Satan destroyed, the powers of hell led captive, and the kingdom of heaven opened? Of that gospel, which brings us near who were far off, and makes us friends who were enemies: which from children of wrath and heirs of hell, makes us sons of God, brethren of Christ, and inheritors of heaven? No, let us ever consider the gospel of Christ as our richest treasure, as our brightest jewel! Let us prize it highly, and study it diligently. Let us in no place, and before no persons, be ashamed to profess it, and to avow ourselves the servants of Jesus. Let us never be ashamed to own that we are guilty, helpless sinners, who look for salvation entirely through the cross of Christ. If we should be called to suffer reproach or loss for Christ's sake, and

the gospel's; let us not be ashamed, but rather glorify God on this behalf. Finally, let us not be ashamed to live according to the gospel. However contrary the spirit and temper of it be to that of the world, let us not shrink from the strict observance of it; nor step aside from the path of duty. For if, through fear of men, we walk as the world walketh, and not after the gospel; then are we ashamed of Christ, and as far as we can, we make the world believe that we think theirs the better way. Far be this from us. Let us so believe in Christ, and so confess him, that being justified by faith, we may have peace with God; and that we being not ashamed of him now, he may not be ashamed of us at the last.

SERMON IV.

2 Corinthians, iii. 9.

For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

THE ministration of condemnation and of righteousness are terms by which the apostle expresses the law and the gospel. The law is called the ministration of condemnation, because, while it forbids sin under the penalty of death, its holy commandment discovers sin in every heart; and thus every mouth is stopped, and all the world brought in guilty before God. The gospel is called the ministration of righteousness, because it *provides* a righteousness for those whom the law discovers

to have none of their own ; and offers justification freely by grace, to those who could not be justified by the deeds of the law.

Now both these dispensations are in the text said to be glorious: the ministration of condemnation, glory ; the ministration of righteousness, exceeding in glory.

The glory of the law is inferred from the circumstances which attended its first promulgation ; the thunderings, the lightnings, the voices, the smoke, the thick darkness, the shaking of the mount, the sound of the trumpet, the fear of the people, and the brightness of Moses's countenance. For the superior glory of the gospel, an appeal is made to our own reason. We naturally conclude that mercy is more glorious than judgment. This conclusion the apostle admits as just, and grounds upon it the doctrine of the text ; " if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

We have, therefore, two objects presented to our consideration.

I. The glory of the ministration of condemnation.

II. The superior glory of the ministration of righteousness.

I. The marks of glory which attended the

promulgation of the law on mount Sinai, were not empty signs of a thing which did not really exist. Condemnation, if it be righteous condemnation, is a glorious thing. It has indeed an awful glory, yet a true glory. It is the display of justice, the vindication of God's law, and the final triumph of good over evil. And surely that which manifests the justice of God, asserts the honour of his holy law, and assigns to the transgressors of it their deserved portion, must be glorious.

Our conceptions of this awful subject may be in some degree assisted, if we attend to that representation of it, which we see in human tribunals. However faint and imperfect an image this may be of the righteous judgment of God, even in this shadow we see something of that glory which belongs to the substance. We cannot attend to the proceedings of an assize, without being struck with the triumph of truth, order, and justice, over deceit, licentiousness, and wrong. We see it in the most awful instances of condemnation.

Consider the case of a criminal, who is tried for a capital offence. In an open court, before many witnesses, the charges are advanced against him; the evidences of his guilt produced. Men who bear him no ill will, who feel for his situation, constrained by the force

of testimony, pronounce him guilty, though they know that the probable consequence will be death. An enlightened and humane judge is compelled to pronounce the sentence of condemnation; and, after the allowed time, his forfeited life is taken away. Now, mournful as such an example may be, is there nothing glorious in it? Is it not glorious, that the peace, the property, and the lives of honest men, should be thus guarded? Does not the law appear glorious, when it shews itself thus armed with power, and able to take such terrible vengeance on those who transgress its bounds?

Yet, how vastly inferior is the glory of an earthly judicature, to that of the higher judgment, of which it is a faint representation! For, in the first place, it is on a very small scale; and in the next, however carefully its proceedings may be conducted, they are still liable to error. The prisoner may be acquitted, though guilty; he may be condemned, though innocent. And, even if justly condemned, he may suffer while worse men escape. He may suffer on the testimony of worse men. The jury, on whose verdict his life depends, are erring, sinful men; nay, even the judge himself, though not raised to that high office without full proof of wisdom

and integrity, is a fallible mortal, and not without sin; yea, the very law on which the judgment proceeds is not free from imperfections.

Yet, under all these disadvantages, there is a glory in the ministration of condemnation, as it is exercised among men. How glorious, then, the terrible, but just judgment of God!

Before that tribunal will be placed, not a few offenders, in a small part of a small kingdom; but the whole world, and all the generations of men. The law by which all will be tried, perfectly righteous and good; the judge unerring, holy, infinitely just; no room for any false or doubtful testimony; no darkness or disguise to screen the workers of iniquity; the sentence final, unchangeable! What an honour will then be put on God's law, when an everlasting distinction shall be made between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not!

Nevertheless, there is nothing which we are more slow to see than the glory that shines in the ministration of condemnation. We are all too deeply concerned to be unprejudiced judges in this matter. Is the prisoner at the bar a fit person to pronounce on the excel-

lency of those proceedings by which he is sentenced to die? Now we are all transgressors of the law, all guilty before God, all subject to condemnation. How inadequate, then, must be our conceptions of this awful subject, when self-love pleads so strongly against the truth! And though good men have their judgments rectified in a great measure, yet all prejudice is not taken away. If we would know the real character and glory of God's righteous judgment, we must ask those sinless angels and inhabitants of heaven, who shall be witnesses of the august proceedings. With them will be no sentiment, but profound admiration of the holiness of God; and a sacred joy when they behold his vengeance on his enemies. In hell only are those who murmur and blaspheme; heaven rings with the triumphant acclamation: "righteous art thou, O Lord, and true are thy judgments!"

II. But if the ministration of condemnation be glory, the ministration of righteousness exceeds in glory.

In contemplating this part of our subject also, we may derive some advice from a reference to human transactions. The condemnation of offenders is an act of the legislature; but the pardoning of them is a pure act of mercy, an exercise of royal prerogative, and

justly called the brightest jewel of the crown. A wretched man has been tried for a capital offence, and his guilt proved. Perhaps his youth, his inexperience, his unhappy connections, his misfortunes, or his former good character, plead for him. But the law knows no pity. The fact is proved, the sentence must pass, and he waits in trembling expectation for the day of execution. But by one act of sovereign clemency, his condition is wholly changed. His prison doors are opened. He comes forth free. The officers of justice cannot touch him. He takes his place in society again, as if he had not transgressed.

But this glory, amiable as it is, is very imperfect. The royal ear may be abused, so as to pardon the unworthy; or, if popular fury demands a victim, it may not be safe to spare the deserving. Besides, wherever mercy is thus shewn, *justice* is dispensed with; and therefore it cannot be *often* shewn, without defeating the end of civil government. Thus limited, and thus liable to abuse, is this most glorious attribute of majesty.

But no power can controul the exercise of divine mercy; and, as it does not in the least encroach upon justice, it can be extended to multitudes of offenders. Nay, it is actually offered to all; and yet justice is so far from

suffering thereby, that it is in the highest degree displayed and honoured. For though God pardons sinners, he pardons them in such a way as to shew most fully his hatred of sin. He provides a ransom, a surety, a sinless substitute, to stand in the place of sinners; in whose person the demands of law and justice may be fully satisfied, before one transgressor be pardoned. The ministration of righteousness is full of wonder, as well as of glory. Will God shew mercy to sinners? He lays their sins upon his Son, and makes "him to be sin for them, who knew no sin, that they may be made the righteousness of God in him." Thus has the love of God abounded in all wisdom and prudence. So that he can receive into favour the very chiefest of sinners, while his holiness remains unquestionable, his justice unimpeached. Here, then, is a glory which we may well admire in the ministration of righteousness: the glory of justice and holiness; and what is more, the glory of mercy, shining in full agreement with both.

Behold a multitude of transgressors against God's holy law, against whom its sentence of everlasting death was in force, not only delivered from hell, but made the children of God, and heirs of heaven: and all this, not only without any sacrifice of justice; but so,

that even justice is as much magnified in their salvation, as it could have been in their eternally suffering the punishment of their transgressions. And if the blessed inhabitants of heaven adore the justice of God, while it consigns his enemies to endless flames; still more do they admire the unsearchable grace which devised a way to save sinners from eternal death. These things, we are told, the angels desire to look into. The ministration of righteousness has, in their eyes, a glory which excites their most eager attention. We are more interested in it than they, and were we like-minded with them, we should never be satisfied with contemplating it.

The subject will afford matter of useful application to the hearts and consciences of all present.

We are all deeply concerned in it. Before the judgment-seat of Christ every one must stand to "receive the things done in his body, according to that which he hath done; whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The ministration, either of righteousness or of condemnation, must be displayed in every one of you, my brethren. Think of both these things, then, as persons whose eternal happiness or misery is involved in one or the other.

Shall that awful word, condemnation, be

now to you as an unmeaning sound, when it is possible you may one day find it a dreadful reality? Shall not the bare probability of a thing so terrible as the eternal judgment of God, stir you up to give all diligence, to flee from the wrath to come? Think only, if that condemnation should light upon you, it will be *for ever;* no hope that the sentence will be changed, or the punishment remitted. I well know it is a prevailing notion among wicked men, that God will not be so severe as to put his threats in full execution; and they encourage themselves and others in this persuasion, by the idea that the ministration of condemnation is not glorious, but rather dishonourable to God; and that no glory can arise to him, but by making his creatures happy, however they may affront or dishonour him. But this notion of God is not learnt from Scripture, and, on the very face of it, has a suspicious appearance; it seems suggested by the partiality of a heart in love with sin.

If we will consent to be taught by the Scriptures, we shall see that even the act of condemnation is glorious to God; and that, taking into consideration all that we may conceive due to compassion, it is, on the whole, more honourable to him that he should

condemn the impenitent, than that he should spare them; and, this being the case, to give way to compassion would be unworthy of him. We should expect even a human judge, however humane and benevolent, to be above the infirmity of sacrificing to his feelings of compassion what was due to justice. Much more shall we expect the supreme Judge of all to be far removed from suffering any consideration to make him deviate, in the smallest degree, from that which is the wisest and the best, the most agreeable to truth and holiness. He has given a law by which he governs the world. The observance of this law is of the utmost importance to his creation. It cannot be broken without introducing confusion and misery. He has therefore threatened the transgressors of it with the severest vengeance. Can any say that the vengeance is too severe? Do they know what sin deserves? Are they the proper judges of its demerit? Shall the culprit decide on the magnitude of his offence, and the degree of punishment? As God is a righteous God, so the judgment which he threatens is, no doubt, righteous judgment; and, if it be righteous judgment, it will not be dishonourable to him to inflict it; nay, his very perfections require that he should do so, and not suffer his holy law to be dishonoured

by forbearing to execute the sanction by which it is guarded.

Let no one, therefore, deceive himself by imagining that God is a man, that he should lie; or the son of man, that he should repent; or that the attributes of the Almighty are so imperfect, as that one should interfere with another, so that compassion should stop the exercise of justice. When the day of vengeance is come, the season of mercy will be past. There is a time for compassion; and with much long suffering patience, God exercises it, and waits to be gracious; while men, because he is good and patient, grow bold in sin, and "of their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Do you still say, but God is a merciful God? Undoubtedly he is. If he were not, what would have become of each of us? We are all monuments of his mercy. There is not one whom he has not numberless times spared in his sin: and he now offers to all of us the pardon of sin, and free justification through his Son Jesus Christ, if we will repent and believe his gospel. But he is also a just God; and, if we will not embrace the offers of his mercy, we must expect to feel the terrors of his wrath. He *has*

shewn his *compassion*, his *forbearance*; he will display his *justice;* both infinite, both worthy of God!

Oh! then, sinners, while yet there is room for mercy; before death seals your doom for ever; return unto God, and plead with him for mercy and grace, through his well-beloved Son. You shall not plead in vain, if you seek him with all your heart, and with all your soul; for he delighteth in mercy, and if he is glorified in condemning, he is still more glorified in forgiving—not in forgiving, in the *next* life, those who have died impenitent; but in forgiving, in *this* life, those who humble themselves and return to him in his own appointed way. If you do so, my brethren, so far is even the justice of God from being against you, that it will plead, together with his mercy, in your behalf. Every attribute of the Almighty will then be in your favour, and conspire to make open the way for the rich flow of divine love. And as God must be glorified in you, one way or the other, how much better that he should be glorified in your salvation, than in your destruction. Is not this what you yourselves desire? No doubt you wish to be happy after death; but if it be a mere indolent wish, it will do you no good. It must be such a desire as will lead you in

good earnest to say, "what shall I do to be saved?" and such as, when you know the way of salvation, will incline you to walk in it. Hoping that, by the blessing of God, some degree of this desire is excited in your minds; I would conclude with briefly pointing out the way of life in two short directions.

1. If you would obtain life, remember not to seek it by the law; for the law is not the ministration of life, but of death. It is the ministration of condemnation. It worketh wrath. By it is the knowledge of sin. As you have not fulfilled the law, all that you can expect from it is the curse which it denounces against offenders. As long as you seek salvation by the works of the law, you are under that curse; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." In vain, therefore, will you hope for salvation from the law, unless you can say that you have fulfilled the whole. Talk not of the good things which you have done, and of the evils you have abstained from. This is nothing, as to salvation by the law. If you have not kept the whole law, if you have offended in one point, you are transgressors; and the law has nothing for you but condemnation.

But though you are not to seek salvation by

the law, yet you may make excellent use of it, in learning from it your need of a better righteousness than your own. The more you do honestly compare your hearts and lives by that commandment, remembering that it is spiritual, and extends to the thoughts and affections, as well as words and actions; the more you will see that you are carnal, sold under sin, and need to be justified by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the law. And observe, the greatest glory of the law is, that it leads to the gospel; the highest praise of them inistration of condemnation, that it points out the ministration of righteousness. The brightness of Moses's face shining through his veil, was the glory of the gospel appearing under the ordinances of the law. Do not, therefore, mistake the ministration of condemnation for the ministration of righteousness; but let the use which you make of the law, be as a school-master to lead you to Christ, that you may be justified by faith.

2. The second direction is, that in seeking salvation by the gospel, you must not put a mere acknowledgment of the doctrines of grace in the place of lively faith; but must come to Christ, that you may receive at his hands both remission of sins and the gift of his holy spirit. Unless you receive these two

things, the gospel profits you nothing. It is called the ministration of life on this very account, because it gives righteousness, whereas the law brings only condemnation; and it ministers the spirit which giveth life, whereas the law ministers only the letter which killeth. Each of these blessings seek at the hand of Christ.

Do not go about to establish your own righteousness, but submit yourselves to the righteousness of God; even that "righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe." The gospel is the message of reconciliation; believe it, and God and you are at peace. To believe, may seem to you a small and simple thing; but though it be so, it will remove mountains. The moment you believe in Christ, your sins are done away, and there is no condemnation. Oh! then, stay not away through unbelief or self-confidence, as if you had a righteousness of your own, and needed not the righteousness of God; but being convinced of the law as transgressors, look to Jesus; who was lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

And as you believe in him for righteousness, so believe in him also for the gift of the

holy Spirit. The law was but a dead letter. It gave commands; but it afforded no help, no strength against sin, no power to fulfil the precept. But Jesus Christ has received the Spirit without measure, and this Spirit he sheds on his believing people. Receive this Spirit, and the law will be written in your hearts; so that, though you will not seek righteousness by it, you will truly obey it. Your faith will work by love. The strength of sin will be destroyed; and the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in you, while you walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Thus the ministration of righteousness at the same time provides justification for you, though a sinner, and makes you truly holy. It pardons all your sin, it heals all your infirmity; it brings you *near to God*, and it makes you *like God;* it gives you a title to heaven, and makes you meet for heavenly blessedness. Oh! how glorious is this ministration of righteousness! how honourable to God! how beneficial to man! Well might the angels who announced it sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." For in nothing is God so glorified, and man so blessed, as in this message of peace; which unites man with man, and proclaims peace between earth and heaven.

SERMON V.

MATTHEW, XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

IT has been justly observed, that any extravagance in sentiment or conduct, if it be of a description which seldom occurs, is looked upon as a great departure from right reason; while an equal measure of extravagance appearing commonly, and being found in many men, is regarded as but a slight deviation from sobriety of spirit. The sentiment or the practice is not judged of by its own merits, but by the numbers that appear on its side. If almost all men agree in what is wrong, they

of course leave but few to condemn their error. And yet the error is no less because many are deluded by it; nor, on the other hand, would it be any greater, though only one or two persons in a century should fall into it.

To separate this influence of example and precedent, from our estimate of right and wrong, of wise and foolish, is no easy task; and the manner in which men in general judge respecting errors in religion, is a proof how seldom that separation is made. If a person should have upon his mind so strong a sense of future and eternal things, as to affect him in an undue degree, and render him incapable of attending to the common business of life, every one would say that his understanding was disordered. But no suspicion is excited of any unsoundness of intellect, in multitudes, who are so immersed in things temporal, that they have neither leisure, inclination, nor capacity to attend duly to things eternal. The reason is, that this is a mistake which is made every day, and by almost every man, while the former is the singular error of a few.

It is true, that a mind well balanced and rightly regulated, will be properly affected towards both objects; will neither neglect the

present, while contemplating the future; nor forget the future, by being absorbed in the present. But surely it must be allowed, that if an excess on either side be consistent with soundness of mind, it is when this moment of time is slighted for the sake of eternity; not when eternity is disregarded for the sake of time. Yet, because one in a thousand falls into the error of under-rating this present world, the very singularity of his error makes it appear greater than it is; while the error of pursuing this world so eagerly as to shut out all thought of another, is almost disguised by the numbers involved in it.

But let us endeavour to divest ourselves of this prejudice. Let us remember, that if a thing be unreasonable in itself, numbers will not make it reasonable; and as it must be allowed, that things temporal are pursued by most men with far more eagerness than things eternal; let us enquire what can be the cause of so preposterous a choice.

And what can it be, but unbelief?

Every man prefers the greater apparent good to the less; but two considerations enter into his estimate, the greatness of the good proposed, and the certainty of it. Hence, a present advantage is more valued than a future one of equal magnitude. The present

is sure, the future is wrapped in uncertainty. Yet that uncertainty may be over-balanced. If the remote, the future good, be very greatly superior, men can relinquish what is at hand for the sake of it; and if they refuse to do so, when this superiority is so great as to admit of no comparison; it must be because they regard it as very uncertain, or in other words, very faintly believe it. A trifling advantage or pleasure, which lasts but for a moment, can bear no comparison with joys or advantages which shall endure for many years. And if I refuse to give up such momentary pleasure for those better and lasting delights, it must be because I question the reality of them. What, then, must be the case, if I cling to a little present gratification or interest, though it deprives me of eternal joys, or plunges me into everlasting misery? Can I from the heart believe that such will be the consequences of my choice; such the price which I must pay for my momentary gratification?

You will see, my brethren, that the subject to which I am endeavouring to lead your minds, is the degree of credit that men actually give to that eternal state which all profess to believe. That there is a hell, and that there is a heaven, few deny. But, before it

can be admitted that all actually believe these momentous truths, we must examine what effect a real conviction of the certainty of these things must have upon the mind; and thus form our judgment of the faith that is in the world, and what is still more important, of the faith that is in our own hearts.

To begin, then, with that part of this great subject which occurs first in the text: that the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment.

It is utterly impossible for any reasonable being to receive this great truth with indifference; to believe it without emotion. Let a real conviction settle on the heart, that there is a place of torment; a lake of everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; in which, also, ungodly men after death shall have their portion: that the wicked, and all who forget God, shall be turned into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; and what must be the effect of such a conviction fairly settling on the mind? Can it fail to create a powerful revolution, both in sentiment and in practice?

Let us consider, separately,

I. What sentiments it must excite in the mind. And,

II. What change it will produce in the conduct.

I. As to sentiment, it may have a two-fold effect: either filling the mind with hard thoughts of God, and a secret sullen displeasure against him; or creating a deep and humbling sense of the evil of sin, and the terrors of divine justice. The former is the sentiment of devils and wicked men; the latter, of saints and angels. Do you murmur, and indulge high and rebellious thoughts? I do not say that you do not believe. You may believe as the devils do. They rage and rebel, and you rage and rebel. A kindred spirit is in you and them, awfully proving that you are in the same state, and of the same character; like them in disposition and in condemnation. You may, indeed, believe that there is a God, and that there is a hell; but there are other truths which you do not believe, or a change would take place in your feelings and judgment. But this is not my present subject; though in addressing you, before I have done, I may briefly shew you what it is which you want in order to subdue your spirit; and to teach you that needful lesson, to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Another, and much better effect, which this

awful conviction of the truth and eternity of future punishments may produce in the mind, is a sense of the evil of sin. This wholesome impression is sometimes left on the mind after it has been exercised with a long and painful struggle against high and rebellious thoughts, such as have been above mentioned. When they have been overcome, when every objection has been silenced, and the soul bowed to a humble submission ; the conflict is not followed by indifference, but by a deep sense of the evil of sin. It is this, in fact, which helps greatly to silence objections. A discovery is made of the hateful nature of sin. The sentence against it is indeed dreadful; but not more than sin deserves. It is the holy nature of God, his infinite aversion to all sin, which causes him thus to punish it. He does not delight in punishing, but in shewing mercy; he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but if the wicked will go on in his way, he must die.

Men in general do not believe this. They either dispute against it; or if they admit it in words, it has no hold on their minds. It occasions no thoughtfulness, no searchings of heart, no perception of the evil of sin, no awful admiration of divine justice. And hence I infer that they do not believe it ; because it

is impossible for a man to believe a truth so awful, and in which he is so nearly concerned, without very powerful emotions and exercises of heart.

How far each man's mind is so affected with this truth as to evidence a genuine belief of it, must be left to the judgment of his own conscience; but there is another effect which a realizing apprehension of it would produce, which is open and visible.

II. And this is the effect in practice.

Where there is real conviction, men always act upon it. Imagination, if lively, even without faith, may produce strong emotions of mind. These are often produced, not only when there is no belief of the certainty of a thing; but when there is positive assurance of its being fictitious. But imagination, though it may excite the feelings, does not influence the conduct; whereas a steady conviction always does this. The good which men really believe, they fail not to seek after; the evil which they really believe, they fail not to shun. In fact, we live by faith in one sense, far more than is commonly attended to. Why do men plough and sow, but because they believe the yet future and distant fruit of their labour will in time appear? Why do men send ships laden with precious wares

to distant lands, but because they believe they shall receive their own again with rich increase? Or, to view the matter strictly in a religious light; why did Noah prepare the ark, but because he believed that the flood would come, and was moved with fear? Why did the men of Noah's age not repent, and seek mercy before the flood came; but because they did not believe? Why did Lot haste out of Sodom, but because he believed that it would be destroyed? Why did his wife look back, but because, through unbelief, she hankered after her possessions in the devoted city?

Hereby, then, we are furnished with a plain and certain rule by which to judge how far men really believe that there is a hell for the ungodly after death. *Their belief of the wrath to come is exactly in proportion to their diligence in fleeing from it.* Do men tremble at God's word, fear to sin, depart from forbidden enjoyments, pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand? They shew that they truly believe the vengeance to be inflicted on impenitent sinners. And though this single conviction will not enable them to overcome their lusts; yet it will make them so unhappy while under the power of sin, that they will not rest satisfied till they

are delivered from its dominion. But do men go on in sin, bold and remorseless; or, though feeling occasional pangs of conscience, do they soon shake them off, and walk unconcerned in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes? The reason must be, that they do not believe that for all these things God will bring them into judgment, and punish them with everlasting destruction.

Having thus shewn that the generally acknowledged truth, that there is a hell, is in fact very little believed; and that if it were believed, it could not fail to make a strong impression on the mind, and to produce very powerful effects in practice; I would proceed to address a few words on the subject to different descriptions of persons.

1. Let me speak to those who must know, that if they die in the state in which they are, hell, if there be a hell, must be their portion.

Why do you sit still in this dangerous state? How is it that you can live at ease, or lie down in your beds, while under this dreadful condemnation? How can the little cares or little pleasures of a frail and uncertain life, occupy your minds: while no care is taken to escape everlasting burnings, although the breath in your nostrils is all that keeps you out of them? It is, it must be un-

belief. You do not really believe that God will fulfil his word, and punish sinners as he has said. This, however, you will not admit; you will not acknowledge your unbelief; and the argument which you use to cover it is this: you do believe the wrath to come, and believe it to be unspeakably dreadful; you would not, for a thousand worlds, die in the state in which you are at present.—But you hope not to die as you now are. You intend to repent and become religious. Various obstacles prevent your putting your resolutions in force immediately; but you expect a more convenient season, when you mean to turn unto God and lead new lives. In this hope you are confirmed by observing that many have lived for a considerable time in an irreligious course, and have afterwards repented and been saved; and you trust that you also, repenting like them, like them may obtain salvation. Your peace, therefore, is built not on the supposition that there is no place of torment; but on the persuasion that you shall repent and escape it.

In all this there is, no doubt, some truth; but it does not take away the charge of unbelief. For what but unbelief could make any thinking man run the risk of so great an evil as eternal misery. There must be a secret

hope that so dreadful an end does not really await the impenitent, or such weak considerations could not obtain a hearing. A man may suffer a trifling matter to hang on an uncertain hazard; but where life and death, eternal life and eternal death, are concerned, the precarious hope of what *may be* will not suffice to satisfy the mind; or if it can be so satisfied, it is because that eternal bliss or woe is not believed.

Let me appeal to yourselves. Do you ever weigh the meaning of that word eternity? Do you ever realize the thought, 'In a little time I shall be in eternity; a few more years at most, perhaps only a few weeks or hours, and my days will be numbered, and my spirit pass into eternity; and were my soul now to be required of me, it would be in order that it might have its portion in the lake of fire!' Could you realize all this, not merely in imagination, but in the stedfast belief of your heart and judgment; and yet say, 'I will run the risk, I will put off the work of salvation to a distant time, and a few years hence flee from the wrath to come, if it does not overtake me sooner?' Could you thus resolve, if you duly pondered and stedfastly believed an eternity of punishment reserved for the wicked? Could you defer the great

duty of repentance and conversion, when you live in a dying world, and hear so many awful instances even of sudden death? Impossible! it could not be. Believe, then; believe what God has said. He who cannot lie has said, that he will punish the wicked with everlasting destruction. He has said, that the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever. Let me entreat you to devote one hour, this day, to serious meditation on death and eternal judgment. Does not the unwillingness with which you hear of these things shew that the bare mention of them disturbs your repose of incredulity, and brings an unwelcome reality to your view. O, may the Spirit of God impress it on your mind with such wholesome and resistless conviction, that you may be not only warned, but effectually moved to flee from the wrath to come!

2. Let me address those who, having lived formerly like the generality of mankind, in a state of practical unbelief, are beginning to entertain those great objects with a realizing faith.

It is very possible that the immediate effect upon your mind may be far from desirable. Now that you are taking so important a step in the right way, the great enemy of

souls will be apt to molest you, and your own proud, deceitful, and wicked heart, will be fruitful in finding out objections. You will probably be filled with hard thoughts of God. His awful perfections will appear to you in a gloomy, rather than in an amiable light. You will seem farther from loving him than you ever were before; but, distressing as this experience is, you are not in reality in a worse case than formerly, but in a better. There was before the same enmity against the real character of God; only it was not excited. As yet, it is but little of God that you know, and that little tending rather to give you a forbidding, than an inviting idea of the divine character. But look at the other side. Consider, not only the terrors of his wrath; but the wonders of his mercy. Consider what he has done for sinners: how much he has wrought for their salvation; how freely he invites them to receive pardon and reconciliation; and how solemnly he declares that he has no pleasure in their death. Learn to know that he is Love itself; and that it is only the purity of his nature, which makes it necessary that he should take such awful vengeance on the transgressors of that holy law, by which he governs the universe. Thus, instead of murmuring and disputing,

you will own the justice of his righteous sentence; and, while you tremble at the awful consequences of sin, will flee from it as from a serpent. You will learn to lay all the blame of men's destruction upon sin; and see how highly unreasonable it is to charge *him* with it, who is always doing them good, who warns them of their danger, affectionately expostulates with them on their perverseness, and has not withheld any thing from them which might be effectual to deliver them from this dreadful death;—no, not his own Son! He has given the largest and sincerest proofs of good will to men; and therefore no hard thoughts are due to him, if, through their unbelief, they despise the riches of his goodness and long-suffering, and of their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

But I hope there are some present, who have so believed the love of God in Christ, that flying for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them, they have obtained mercy, and are delivered from the fears of death and wrath. They also may shew that they know the terrors of the Lord and believe them, by the distance at which they keep from all sin, and the charity with which they watch over

the souls of others. Being themselves delivered from so great a death, they cannot see others rushing on it without pity and concern. Gladly would they pluck their fellow sinners as brands out of the fire, and save them from the pit of destruction. And with this view, they will walk in wisdom towards them that are without; careful not to give needless offence, yet willing to run the risk of offending, if good can be done to the souls of men.

Christian brethren, you who have a good hope, through grace, of your own salvation, have you this tenderness, this compassion for the souls of others? Do you reprove those that sin, and are you careful not to put a stumbling block in the way of any? If you do so, it is a good sign; and your cautious and charitable zeal may do much good. You may be instrumental to the salvation of souls. But if, while you boast of being yourselves delivered from condemnation, you can see others perishing in sin without pity; if you neither reprove nor instruct as you have opportunity, nor try to recommend the gospel; take heed that you be not deceived: take heed lest, while you suppose that you are safe, you should be yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

I have been speaking this day on a very awful subject; and it may be, that the plain things which have been delivered may be painful and offensive to some; but I would hope that the subject has not been touched upon in vain. Earnestly do I pray that it may tend to your final salvation: and if, my brethren, it should, through divine grace, be the means of preventing any of you from going to that place of torment; O! what praises through a happy eternity will result from the awful things which you have this day heard.

SERMON VI.

MATTHEW, XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

SO important is genuine faith, and so beautifully linked together are the truths of Scripture; that if any man believes from the heart one or two of its principal doctrines, he can hardly fail to be led, step by step, till he receives with like precious faith the whole testimony of God, and is made wise unto salvation. Of what great moment, therefore, is it that faith be mixed with the word! Otherwise the word is rendered unprofitable to us, and what we hear, we hear in vain.

That the generality do thus ineffectually hear of hell, and are not warned to flee from the wrath to come, we saw in the last discourse. And though heaven is a delightful sound, and

all men hope to go there; if we judge of the actual belief that there is such a place, by the test of a heavenly conversation, and diligent labour to enter into that rest; I fear we shall be constrained to own, that but few believe the report of that good land.

There are two ways in which a man may believe this great truth.

I. He may simply believe that there is a heaven. Or,

II. He may believe that he himself is an heir of heaven.

I. When we say, a man may simply believe that there is a heaven: we mean not merely that he may acknowledge that there is a high and holy place where God is, and where happy angels live; but we suppose him also to believe that righteous men shall go thither after death, and there continually dwell. Now wherever this belief is, three things appear to me naturally to flow from it.

A sense of the dignity and grandeur of a human soul.

A fear of falling short of that rest.

And laborious and wisely-directed endeavours to attain it.

That a human soul should be capable of heavenly blessedness, conveys a high idea of its dignity and grandeur. When I look up

to the heavens and behold the sun shining in his strength, I discern a bright manifestation of the Creator's glory. But when I see a righteous man, I discover a still fairer representation of the divine perfections. For the sun displays only the natural glory of God: a good man exhibits the brighter glory of his holiness. Moreover, the time will come when the sun shall be extinguished, and those cheerful beams of his turned into darkness. But the time will never come when a holy soul shall cease to reflect the brightness of his Creator's glory. When the righteous shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father, they shall shine there for ever. Eternal ages shall see no diminution of that divine resemblance. Nay, for any thing we know, they will grow brighter and brighter, everlastingly advancing from glory to glory.

Now, this glory every soul of man is capable of possessing; and therefore there is not a man upon earth, not the poorest beggar, not the meanest slave, but possesses a grandeur far beyond that of earthly crowns or sceptres; because these things must pass away: no device can prolong earthly dominion beyond the grave: but the heavenly crown is incorruptible, and every one may win and wear it.

Now, my brethren, if you really believe that there is such an incorruptible crown, and that you are called to obtain it; such a belief cannot fail to produce in your minds a generous and exalted feeling. You will not think it suitable either to your origin or your hopes, that you, who were created in the likeness of God, and are capable of shining in that likeness as the brightness of the firmament, for ever and ever, should pollute with base lusts and low affections, a soul which is called to such a kingdom, to such glory. You will not despise any man, however inferior to you in worldly distinctions; because every man was made in the image of God, and every man is capable of recovering it, and of being satisfied with that blissful likeness to eternity.

See, I pray, how far you are thus practically affected with the dignity of a human soul; and thus measure your actual belief of what is said in Scripture concerning heaven.

Where this belief really is, a second thing which will flow from it is, a fear of falling short of heaven.

This fear is so far from indicating any *want of faith*, that it is a *sign of faith*. Men's *fears* as well as their *hopes* are alive to what they actually believe. Do you, my brethren,

believe that there is a glorious rest to be obtained? A holy fear, lest you should fall short of it will, in a greater or less degree, attend that belief. It becomes you to fear. Your race is not yet run; your warfare not yet accomplished. Heaven is not yet seen and possessed; but only believed and hoped for. Unless, therefore, you can say there is nothing at all in you which calls for jealousy, which warrants the suspicion that you may fail of obtaining the prize, you ought to fear; it would be a sign of stupidity and unbelief not to do so.

Now I can hardly suppose that there is any one among you, who will boast that there is nothing in him which makes self-jealousy reasonable. Is there no formality, no lukewarmness, no backwardness, to prayer and other spiritual duties? You will not pretend this. But can you be conscious of these and other evils, and yet feel no fear lest all should not be right? Nay, what talk I of these things, as if it were a hard matter to find out any wrong thing which your conscience must admit? Do not many of you sin knowingly and willingly, even in outward practice? Do not many of you break the sabbath, or take the name of God in vain? Are there not some who drink to excess, others who live in

malice and evil-speaking, and others again in fraud and lying? And do not these things make you seriously afraid that you shall never see heaven, except afar off, like the rich man in torments? Alas! no; for you do not, with a realizing faith, believe that there is a heaven. The realities with you are the world, and the things that are seen; heaven, and the things which are not seen, are like fables with you; they serve you to talk about, but you cannot act upon them as things real. Let me beseech you to attend seriously to that important admonition of the apostle: "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Consider well, I beg of you, the case of the Israelites, which he proceeds to set forth: a promise was given them of entering into rest; yet out of six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty males, who were numbered in the wilderness, two only entered into that good land. All came out of Egypt in their way thither, and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual meat, and all drank the same spiritual drink; yet with far the greatest part God was not pleased: so some fell by serpents, some by the destroyer; and all, save Caleb and Joshua, were

overthrown in the wilderness, and not permitted to enter into that rest. Now these things happened unto them as examples, and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come. Therefore, my brethren, give the most earnest heed to the things which you have heard, lest at any time ye should let them slip; for though many are called, few are chosen. Not all who set out for heaven, will in the end arrive there. Many who have been baptized, and who have eaten and drunk at Christ's table, shall find the door of heaven shut against them; and shall stand without and knock, crying in vain, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." For "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

This fear of falling short is very wholesome: for where it takes possession of the mind, it will produce that effect, which I would in the third place state as flowing from real faith. A diligent and wisely directed endeavour to obtain the prize.

When men conceive a great and worthy object to be placed within their reach, they can exert much earnest and self-denying labour in the pursuit of it. Though it be but a perishing crown which they would win in a

race, they are temperate in all things while they strive for the mastery, and so run that they may obtain. Now, if men will do all this for a corruptible crown, or for any other object of earthly ambition or desire, because they believe that object to be real and attainable; would not the same faith make them at least equally laborious and self-denying in the pursuit of a heavenly and never-fading crown?

Nor is it enough to strive hard: men must strive lawfully. No one could gain the prize at an earthly race by running at random, however swiftly. He must run in the course, start at the appointed moment, and observe all the laws of the ground. Men do all this, because they look upon the prize as a reality; and if heaven also appeared to them as a reality, they would bring the same obedient circumspection, as well as the same self-denying labour, to the Christian race, to the Christian warfare. They would run not as uncertainly; they would fight not as beating the air. Their labours, their self-denials, would have a determinate object; would all tend to that one point, the attainment of heavenly glory, and acquiring a meetness for it by keeping the body under, and bringing it into subjection. They would not be content with the perform-

ance of a few easy duties, which left sins unmortified, and idols unrenounced; but faithfully and anxiously would they inquire, what things yet remained to stand between them and heaven; what evil tempers were yet to be subdued, what lusts to be crucified, what vanities of the world to be renounced, what graces to be attained or strengthened. Thus forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, they would press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; if that prize, and that high calling were really believed.

II. Thus far we have considered what faith would do, considering it merely as a belief that there is a heaven held out to the hopes and pursuit of men. But a man may not merely believe this; he may further believe, that he himself has an interest in heaven, is already in the right way, and bidding fair to be a partaker of eternal glory.

It would take me too far out of the limits of my present subject, if I were to state fully on what grounds a man is authorized to believe this.

It is universally acknowledged, that heaven will be the portion of the righteous. This is admitted on all hands. On this point there is

no dispute that I know of among professing Christians. He, therefore, who believes that he is himself in the way to heaven, must believe that he is a righteous person. For not to suppose this, and yet to believe that he should be admitted into heaven, would be so far from faith, that it would be a flat contradiction to some of God's plainest declarations. "What, know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" However, a person believing that he is a righteous man, is required to believe also that he shall see the face of his Saviour in righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness.

Here are two things believed: the one, that the man is righteous; the other, that in righteousness he shall see God. In the former, he may be mistaken; but it is a mistake which our present subject does not lead us to examine. We are to inquire how a man would be led to think and act, who believed in heaven as his own inheritance. And, in fact, this very enquiry will help to solve the question, whether a man is righteous or not; for he who thinks and acts as becomes an heir of glory, is, no doubt, a righteous person.

In the first place, then, if a man believes that heaven is his, and that he is in the way thither; he will not unnecessarily entangle

himself in the affairs of this life, but will so order his worldly concerns, that they may advance his heavenly possessions. When a man is returning home from a foreign country, he does not think of forming new connexions in the land which he is going to leave; his mind is not occupied in making purchases in it, or planning schemes of aggrandisement there; but he looks to those friends and connexions, which he hopes to meet with in his native land. Thither he remits his substance, and there he hopes to find it. He is not ungrateful to the land wherein he has been a sojourner, nor altogether unmindful of its interests. His joys and hopes are not unmixed with some portion of regret, when the moment approaches in which he must take leave of friends whom he has loved, and who have cheered the hours of his sojourning in a strange land. But his best friends, his choicest treasure, are in his own country, and there will his heart be also: there he longs to be, and he makes all his arrangements with a view to his making it for the future his place of abode.

Now, do you say you believe that heaven is yours, and that in a short time you shall there take up your everlasting habitation? Well; what, then, are you doing? Are you laying up your treasures there? Do you remit thi-

ther your substance before-hand, and do you expect to find it safely laid up for you on your arrival? Instead of seeking to be rich in worldly goods, are you striving and labouring to be rich towards God, rich in faith, rich in good works; ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life? Certainly, if you are found doing this, you give a most strong proof both that you do believe that heaven is yours, and that you have not mistaken your own character. For a mere imagination could not have produced this patient continuance in well doing. The tree is known by its fruits; your good fruits shew you to be indeed good trees; trees that shall ere long be planted in the paradise of God.

But if there is nothing of this spirit: if your heart is worldly, and your conduct worldly; if you do not live as strangers and pilgrims, and make good your confident expectation of heaven by your genuine disregard of earth, by your quietness, and liberality, and humble contentedness in whatever station of life you are; then your profession that heaven is yours, is not a real faith, even of that very thing; and it is to be feared that you have very little right to call it so, and very little

pretension to the denomination of righteous persons, in the Scripture meaning of that term.

Further, a man really believing that heaven is his, and that he is in the way thither, will naturally be inquisitive to know as much as possible respecting the heavenly state; and will be anxious to be qualified for the precise enjoyments of that state. To return to our former illustration: suppose a man to have dwelt from his childhood in a foreign land, but to be now preparing to settle in his own country. Of the manners and customs of that country he knows nothing from his own experience; but by enquiring from others who have been there, and from books, he collects all the information he can on the interesting subject. It is one which nearly concerns him. He longs to know what he must expect when he arrives at home. So you, if you really think you are going to heaven, and shall soon be there, cannot be so indifferent to that everlasting period of your existence as not to inform yourselves, as minutely as possible, what sort of a place heaven is, what the employments of it, in what its blessedness consists.

People who scarcely believe there is a heaven at all, and who examine little respecting their own interest in it, content themselves

with supposing that it is in some way or other a happy place. But this does not satisfy you. If more is to be known, you will know it. You are concerned to know it as a matter of most interesting information; for what is more interesting than *how* you are to spend an eternity! And you are concerned to know it, also, as a matter very nearly connected with present duty. A life of religion seems to be a sort of education for heaven; a training up for glory; a course of pupilage, in which the requisite qualifications and dispositions are to be acquired, which may fit the candidate for immortality to engage in the employment, and taste the joys of the heavenly kingdom.

Now, by the diligence with which you make this enquiry; by the interest which you take in what is going on in the courts above, will be seen your belief of heaven, and of your own title to it. Because you feel a personal concern in these glorious things, therefore you desire to know all that can be known about them. And when you learn that the happiness of heaven is to see Christ face to face, and to be like him; to join with angels and arch-angels in ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever

and ever. If this view of heaven suits your taste, and inflames you with a longing desire to catch more of that spirit, to be even here engaged in the same blessed work ; then have you a good proof, not only of your actual faith, but also of a growing meetness for heavenly bliss. Go on ; your songs here below will be imperfect and varied ; you will have to raise, not always a joyous, but sometimes a mournful note. But there sorrow shall be no more : all tears shall be wiped away, and you shall be for evermore employed in the praises of your Redeemer, lifting up your voice in concert with

> " Those blessed spirits who bear victorious palms,
> " Hymns devout, and holy psalms;
> " Singing everlastingly."

On the contrary, if you take no pains to acquire the temper of heaven, how can you believe you are going thither? Can any man think it a happiness to join a society with whose manners he is unacquainted, and to take part in a work which he understands not, and for which he has no taste? Alas! deluded men! if you *do* believe that you are going to heaven, you believe it in vain. Even if you were in heaven, you could not enjoy it. You need another spirit; not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is

of God; that you may know, and believe, and be capable of enjoying, the things which are freely given you of God; which spirit I pray God to give you for his dear Son's sake; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour, dominion, and glory, for ever and ever.

SERMON VII.

JOHN, vi. 68, 69.

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

TO a considerate mind, nothing can be so desirable as some satisfactory information respecting the unseen concerns of a future life. Where and from whom this satisfaction may be obtained, must to such a mind be an object of most interesting enquiry. The text supposes such an enquiry; and, rejecting every other source of information, points to Jesus Christ as alone possessing the words of eternal life. I stop not to examine the context; suf-

fice it to say, that it fully justifies the above general application of the words. And in this general application a large field opens before us. We might examine every system which pretends to satisfy the mind on this important subject; and thus, from the most extended comparison, shew the vast superiority of the gospel of Christ.

But even if we had materials for so minute an investigation, it is not necessary. We may class every thing which is not the gospel under three or four heads; and thus setting out from the most remote point, and advancing through several successive steps, come at last to the gospel of Christ, and see if that is not the true and the only true rest to the soul of man.

There are then, I think, four suppositions, which include all that men can be on the subject of religion. They may be Atheists, they may be Infidels, they may be Believers in the law of Moses, and they may be Christians.

Suppose, then, a man to settle in Atheism. I venture to affirm, that it is utterly impossible that he should on this system obtain a rational repose to his mind with respect to a future world. In the first place, no one can overlook the impossibility of his satisfying himself that his system is true. Some latent suspicion must remain that his conclusions may perad-

venture be wrong; that the appearances of design and wisdom which abound in the world may not be delusive shews, but real indications of a divine hand. And if so, if there be a God, what has the Atheist to expect?

But suppose for a moment the Atheistical system established. Suppose the Atheist to have arrived at a demonstrative proof that there is no God. Still, on the point of a future state, he would have no certainty even of annihilation itself to compose his fears. The only conceivable ground on which Atheism can give rest to the mind must be, that it seems to exclude future punishments. But this is a delusion: it does no such thing. The possibility, both of a future state, and also in some sense of future punishments, would stand, even if Atheism itself were established.

Those who suppose that the system of Atheism, if true, would do away the idea of a state of existence after death, proceed on principles which are just in themselves, but for which there is evidently no room. It may be just to conclude, that if there is no God, there can be no future state; but it can be just, only on the ground, that if there is no God, there can be no state of being at all; that if there is no God, there is nothing; a void, unfilled either by created or by uncreated natures. This

may be just; but it is a principle which comes in too late. The void *is* filled. *We see* a world around us; we make a part of that world; we think, we feel, we act, we live. If, therefore, there is no God, there can be life and being without God; and if so now, why not hereafter? If we could come into existence without God; why not be restored to it without him? Is resuscitation more a work of divine agency than creation? May not one be as much a chance process as the other? In a word, are we not compelled to conclude, that whether there be or be not a God, we may exist hereafter, because we exist now? If therefore the Atheist will not, or cannot see in every object in nature, the proof of a God, he must at least see the evidence of existence; of existence, not only possible but certain; and therefore enough to prevent him from reposing in the confident assurance of annihilation.

Still he may think, that though the possibility of a future state be admitted, the idea of future punishments must on his system be done away; because, if there be no God to be displeased, there can be none to take vengeance. And undoubtedly the idea of punishments, in the strict sense of the word, as inflictions of divine displeasure, could on

his scheme have no place. But there might be what to the Atheist himself would amount to precisely the same thing. There might be a state of suffering; and not only so, but a state of suffering in consequence of sin.

Let us again appeal to experience. Is there not suffering in this world? And if in this, why not in another? Whatever that chance or necessity be, which produces suffering now, may not the same chance or necessity produce suffering hereafter? And further, are not the sufferings of the present time very commonly the direct consequences of sin? Is not inconsideration attended by embarrassment; idleness by poverty? And do not intemperance and debauch cause diseases and untimely death? How, or by what law, this connexion is established, let the Atheist determine. It is enough for our purpose to shew that it does exist; and that therefore no possible reason can be assigned why it may not exist again.

Thus, while the system of the Atheist tears away every consolation in the hour of suffering, and all that is soothing in the thought of a superintending providence, and exhibits the uncomfortable idea of a Fatherless world; there is nothing in it which can give satisfaction to his enquiries respecting a future state;

but his mind must hang in a painful uncertainty, between the prospect of annihilation, or of an unexplored existence, the happiness or misery of which shall be either matter of chance, or by some inexplicable law connected with goodness or with guilt.

The first step towards truth from the region of Atheism is, the system of Infidelity, which admits the evidences of natural religion, but acknowledges not the authority of Scripture; maintains the being of a God, but denies that he has made any other revelation of himself to man, than that which appears in the works of creation. This system evidently admits of a state of retribution; but it does not contain any provision for giving the mind rest in the prospect of that state. For it must not be forgotten, that as the Atheist must have some mis-givings lest his system should prove false, and he be found accountable for overlooking those marks of design in the structure of the world, which evince the existence and operation of an intelligent Creator: so the Infidel must have some suspicions that the gospel may be true; and that, if it be true, he will have to answer for slighting evidences which demanded his most serious attention; and which might, if fairly weighed, have commanded his assent.

But let this pass. Let it be supposed that the Infidel has proved to demonstration, that Christianity is a cunningly devised fable. Which way then will he turn himself? To whom will he go? Will he apply to any of the other religions which exist in the world? Will he seek rest among the followers of Mahomet or of Brahma, and search in the pages of the Koran or the Shasters, for those words of eternal life which he cannot find in the gospel of Christ? Let him go were he will, what will he find but impure and bloody rites, or at best vain superstitions? And can he embrace these, while he denies the gospel of Jesus Christ, which presents a spiritual worship, a rational service, such as is worthy of God, and suited to the nature and condition of man?

We must therefore suppose him who rejects the gospel to discard also every other scheme of religion, and to settle in the worship of the God of nature, as he is revealed in the works of creation. It is strange, that those who exalt natural religion, while they deny revelation, do not see that the works of creation, however clearly they may proclaim the being of a God, and declare his power, wisdom, and goodness, and thus intimate our obligations to gratitude and obedience, say

not a word about his will respecting man. Of the manner in which he will deal with his creatures, the whole universe gives not an atom of information. On this interesting question all nature is silent; and respecting his future destiny, the Infidel is left to dark conjectures and uncertain apprehensions. Of duty he may gather so much as to know, that as there is a God to whom he owes all things, he ought to glorify him as God and to be thankful. But when he may be considered as having performed this duty, how far he may have fallen short of it, and what may be the consequences of his failure; here is a darkness which may be felt, an ignorance deep and distressing.

Perhaps a more favourable representation of the hopes of a Deist cannot be found, than that which closes Paley's interesting volume of Natural Theology. The author, speaking of death, and observing, that "we have a wise and powerful Being, upon whom to rely for the choice and appointment of means, adequate to the execution of any plan which his goodness or his justice may have formed, for the moral and accountable part of his terrestrial creation;" thus concludes, "That great office rests with him: be it ours to hope and to prepare; under a firm and settled persuasion

that living and dying we are his, that life is passed in his constant presence, that death resigns us to his merciful disposal." An Infidel could not desire a more advantageous statement of his hopes. Indeed it is more than the Infidel has a right to; more than the valuable author intended for him. For he supposes the true Theist to be prepared by natural religion to *receive* that which is revealed, not to *reject* it. An Infidel who rejects the gospel, must have an unfairness of mind which this writer does not suppose in the person to whom his concluding sentence is intended to apply.

But suffer the Infidel to take the benefit of it, and what rest will it afford him? Let us examine the passage. "Be it ours to hope and to prepare." What is the Infidel's preparation? Are Infidels remarkable for a diligent endeavour after purity of heart and innocence of life? Does not even Hume, in his description of virtue, confound moral and constitutional qualities? Does not Gibbon plead for lewdness, and palliate seduction? And do not both insidiously assail the gospel with a covert and disguised attack? What was the life, what the death of the French Voltaire; or of the English Infidel Paine? Where are the Infidels who act upon the

"persuasion that living and dying they are God's?" If such can be found, let them take what comfort they can from the concluding expressions, "life is spent in his constant presence, and death resigns us to his merciful disposal." The word *merciful* is, indeed, the expression of a Christian writer. The Infidel, however, must admit its propriety, and confess that he has need of mercy. Yet where can he learn a word on the subject, but from the Gospel? Thus, after allowing to the Infidel every possible advantage, we find that his prospects of futurity must be such as cannot give a reasonable satisfaction and rest to his mind.

Driven, therefore, from every other resource, the enquirer after peace must come to the word of authentic revelation. And such is the Old Testament. Nor is there any inconsistency in supposing a man to believe it, who does not believe the gospel. It stands on its own independent evidence; and would remain true, if the gospel were proved a fable. In fact, false Christs and false prophets did arise; yet the truth of the Old Testament remained undisputed, and would have remained so, even if Jesus had not appeared to be the promised Messiah. The gospel, indeed, being found true, both gives to the Old Tes-

tament, and in turn receives from it, a wonderful confirmation. But each might stand alone; though, on the supposition that either of them was false, some difficulties would remain from the chronological prophecies in the Old Testament, and from the frequent references to Moses and the prophets contained in the New.

We are not called upon, however, to examine the consistency of those who, while they admit the law, deny the gospel. Undoubtedly they shut their eyes, not only against the peculiar evidences of the New Testament, but also against very strong proofs of its truth contained in those very Scriptures which they admit; and to which our Lord, when speaking to the Jews, makes his appeal: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." But our object is to enquire, what ground for peace and hope they have, who believe the law, but do not believe the gospel. In short, the question may be put in the words of St. Paul: "What advantage hath the Jew?" And true, in this application of it also, will be his answer: "Much every way." For the Jew has a manifold advantage over the Atheist and the Infidel. He has the oracles of God. He has an authentic declaration

of the will of God concerning him, with a promise annexed: "This do, and thou shalt live." So that provided the gospel were not true, and no guilt lay at his door for rejecting it; he might, if he fulfilled the commandment, live by the law. But here lies the difficulty, to perform such an obedience as shall satisfy the conscience. Herein it is that the law is weak through the flesh; and in this point, the more sincere a man is, the more he will feel its weakness and his own guilt.

It is a remarkable circumstance that a young man, who thought he had kept all the commandments from his youth; came to our Lord running, and kneeling down asked, what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life. Now the very act of his so coming shews, that notwithstanding his high opinion of himself, he nevertheless distrusted his obedience. There was something wanting, something amiss. His conscience was not satisfied, nor his mind at ease. And this must ever be the case with those who are earnestly seeking salvation by the works of the law. The only end of the law to a sinful creature must be to perform the office of a school-master, in leading him to Christ. The spirituality of its precept condemns him, slays his hope, leaves him guilty and miserable; while its sacrifices, its

types, and prophecies, shew him the remedy for all his woes, and point to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

One of the two following things must be the case with every man who is looking for salvation from his obedience to the law. Either, being ignorant of its extensive and spiritual meaning, he must be satisfied with a very partial and defective obedience; and thus think himself safe and in the way to heaven, when he is in fact in the road to destruction—Or else, after his best service, he must still feel himself not only an unprofitable, but an offending servant; and be led to ask, "what must I do to be saved?"

In the former case, it is quite true that his conscience is at peace; he has no fears, no sense of condemnation. But then it is also true, that this his peace is entirely negative. It is merely freedom from fear. It is not a sense of favour and acceptance with God satisfactorily ascertained. And in the next place, whatever it is, it is not the law which gives it, but ignorance of the law. St. Paul, who possessed this kind of peace himself, calls it being "alive without the law;" and the holy commandment of God is so far from giving it to any man on earth, that it is no sooner understood than it destroys this peace. A

peace such as this is purely the offspring of ignorance and pride, and is possessed indiscriminately by Atheists, Infidels, Jews, and nominal Christians. It forms, therefore, no exception to the great point maintained through the whole of this discourse: that none of the systems which we have been considering can give a man peace; can afford him a satisfactory ground to hope that he shall escape the punishment of sin in another world.

But another effect of the law in the conscience was mentioned: it may lead a man to feel himself an unprofitable servant, a miserable sinner, and cause him to enquire for some other and more practicable plan of salvation. Thus would he be taught to weigh the evidences, and examine the doctrines of the gospel, which is the only remaining system to be considered; and this, we shall see, provides that very peace, and affords that rest to the soul, after which we have been enquiring.

But this important part of our subject is far too large and extensive for the remainder of our time. If it please God, I will endeavour next Sabbath-day to prove at large what I have just asserted: that the gospel does give that peace which is in vain sought for in any other quarter. And I pray God, that the effect of this extended discussion may be, that

you may see more clearly than you ever did before, the superior excellency of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and that you may so receive it, and walk in it, as to find rest to your souls.

SERMON VIII.

JOHN, vi. 68, 69.

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

WE saw in the last discourse that whereever men go, if they depart from Jesus Christ, they can find no satisfaction to their minds, with respect to a future state. Whether they persuade themselves that there is no God; or whether they admit the being of a God, but deny the revelation which he has given of his Son Jesus Christ; and whether they do this as Infidels or as Jews; whether rejecting or ad-

mitting the Scriptures of the Old Testament; still, on any supposition, as long as the gospel is not believed, their prospects beyond the grave must be clouded with gloomy apprehensions and awful uncertainty.

Contrast now with these dark forebodings, the assured persuasion, the distinct knowledge, which the gospel affords: "*We know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Thus St. Paul speaks; and in the same manner St. John: "*We know* that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Where do we find, from any other quarter, language like this? What other system than the Christian could authorize this strain of assurance? What other teacher than Jesus Christ could enable his followers to look forward into futurity, and to say, "*We know* ?"

On so important a point as our existence in a future world, nothing can be so desirable as this certainty; nor can any thing short of this reasonably satisfy the mind. When we read, therefore, of those who attained it by the gospel; what is more obvious than the two following enquiries?

I. Is this gospel true? And,

II. Does it afford the like assurances to us, which it gave to St. Paul and to St. John?

I. When we attend to the first of these questions, and consider with what a blaze of evidence the gospel is accompanied; it seems strange that any person to whom it was proposed, could ever reject it.

It is the dictate of reason, that no one can suspend or change the established laws of nature, but the author of nature. When, therefore, the Jews who lived in the days of our Lord, saw him heal the sick and cleanse the lepers with a word; when they beheld him by a touch giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb; nay, even restoring the dead to life; no conclusion could be more just than that which was expressed by Nicodemus: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." The obstinacy of those who, in the face of such miracles, persisted in unbelief, was without excuse; the faith of those who believed, most reasonable.

Now, if we can be satisfactorily assured that these miracles were really performed, there is as much reason that they should command our assent to the doctrine which they confirmed; as there was, that they should compel the

belief of those who were eye-witnesses of them. For, provided we are convinced that these supernatural works were really performed; in whatever way we come by this conviction, they are equally proofs of the truth of that doctrine, in confirmation of which they were wrought.

We all know that testimony may be so strong as to leave no more doubt on the mind concerning the facts thus communicated to us, than if we had seen them with our eyes. Who doubts that Napoleon Bonaparte was, in the year 1815, carried to St. Helena? Yet we know this only by testimony. Or, to go back to ancient times, who disputes that there lived such a man as Julius Cæsar; and that he once invaded this country? No one hesitates for a moment to admit this. He is as perfectly satisfied of its truth, as if he had seen it; yet neither this, nor any other fact recorded in ancient history, to which we yield the most undoubting assent, is supported by a testimony which can for a moment be compared with that which transmits to us the miracles performed by our Lord and his apostles. The witnesses in this case are the most competent and unobjectionable that can be desired; and the authenticity of their writings is ascertained by a continued chain of testimonies from their time to ours; forming a body of

evidence, the like to which was never known in any other instance. Then how wonderfully do the Old and the New Testaments accord, and support each other! How astonishing, that so many distinct books, written by different men, in different ages, and in different places, should yet all perfectly agree; and each make a part of one consistent plan! The things which are foretold in the Old Testament, are in the New Testament partly accomplished, partly continue to receive their accomplishment to this very day, and will continue to do so to the end of the world; for though so many predictions have been fulfilled, the store-house of prophesy is not yet exhausted.

But further, he that believeth hath the witness in himself. There is, to the true believer, an evidence from a spiritual understanding of the great doctrines of Scripture, by which he is assured of the certainty of those things in which he has been instructed. And to this witness of the Spirit, our Saviour refers in his memorable answer to the confession of Peter, which is recorded in the 16th chapter of St. Matthew: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To which Jesus replies, "Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my

Father which is in heaven." In the same manner, every man who is disposed to do the will of God, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether it be a cunningly devised fable. From the external evidences, and the inward teaching of the Spirit, he shall possess the most satisfactory conviction of the truth of that gospel, which afforded such certainty of their future happiness to St. Paul and St. John.

II. The second question still remains to be considered. Does this gospel afford a like assurance to us?

And to this question we may answer in the affirmative. Provision is made for the assured peace of all who believe the gospel, in two respects. In the nature of the doctrine which it contains; and, in the teaching of the Holy Spirit, who opens the eyes of the understanding, and enables those who are spiritual so to comprehend the truth, as that they may be filled with joy and peace in believing.

As to the doctrines, nothing can be more calculated to satisfy the mind when they are rightly understood, and from the heart believed. The great scope and object of them is, to point out the true state of man as ruined by sin, and the method of recovery by Jesus Christ. Here is nothing ambiguous or inde-

terminate. All are in a state of guilt and wickedness by nature; and all may be saved by grace. All are under just condemnation on account of sin; and all may receive free justification by believing in Jesus Christ. Every thing hangs suspended on this one point. "He that believeth, is not condemned; but he that believed not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God:" by him all things are finished which relate to the salvation of sinners, and nothing is wanting but faith on their part to receive the salvation. Jesus has paid their debt, has borne their sins in his own body on the tree, and has proved the sufficiency of his atonement by rising from the dead. He is ascended into heaven; he sits at the right-hand of God; and is able to save, to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Here all is distinct. The mind of the enquirer after peace is not perplexed with uncertain conjectures, or with doubtful measures of obedience to an imaginary mitigated law; but he is taught to look upon himself as a ruined sinner, and unto Jesus as an all-sufficient Saviour; and is expressly assured, that if he believes in him he shall be saved.

How plain is all this! Yet the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The blindness of the human heart, pride, prejudice, and worldly lusts, all stand in the way of a doctrine, which requires a man to be humbled as a sinner, to receive with the simplicity of a little child, truths which are offensive to his prejudices, and which would lead him to renounce the world, to take up his cross, and to follow Christ in a holy and heavenly conversation.

But the Holy Ghost overcomes all these obstacles, and prepares the heart to receive the truth in the love of it. He convinces a man of sin; makes him to feel his need of a Saviour; shews him the suitableness of the gospel salvation to his necessitous case; gives him to see the glory and grace of Christ, the excellency of the law of God, the beauty of holiness, the hope of his calling, and the riches of the heavenly inheritance. And here we may notice by the way, an additional evidence of the truth of Scripture, which contains so clear an account of the real state and character of man; and which reveals a way of salvation, so divinely suited to his circumstances. But not to insist upon this; the believer has hence

an evidence of his own interest in that salvation, arising from the accordance of his views with the truths of Scripture, and from the light, strength, and holiness, which he thence derives. He was blind, but now he sees; he sees his own heart to be by nature very different from what he once thought it; and he sees too, the blessed change wrought in it by divine grace. The secret of the Lord is with him; he understands the true way of becoming holy. He receives eternal life as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus. Hence love constrains him, he overcomes the world, he crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts, he loves the brethren, he lives to God.

Now, in all this there is such evident proof of a real operation of the divine Spirit, that he who is the subject of it can scarcely fail to be conscious that he is so. Hence he knows his interest in Jesus; and that being accepted in the beloved, he has a title to eternal life. Christ has marked him to be his, and sealed him to the day of redemption by that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory.

Such are the satisfactory assurances which the gospel affords. Thus has Jesus Christ the words of eternal life.

And will any go from him to the darkness of Atheism, the doubts of Infidelity, or the bondage of the Law? Will not each say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Though I ask this question, I do it not with the smallest suspicion that any Atheists or Infidels, properly so called, are here present. It is indeed a melancholy fact, that many persons, and those of the labouring class of the community, spend their little leisure time in reading Infidel books, and disputing against the Scriptures. But such do not frequently attend in this house of God. It is useless, therefore, to consume time in addressing those who are not present to hear.

But are there no practical Atheists? Are there none who live without God in the world? Are there none who, except for some customary attendance in this house, and a bare form, it may be, of private worship, never think of God from day to day; do not live in his fear, do not acknowledge his providence, do not see his hand disposing and controlling every event? Are there not many who live in open or secret sin? And what are these? Practical Atheists. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." When you sin, what do you else

but in effect say, "thou God seest not?" Alas! what is this but practical Atheism? Let but the acknowledged truth, that there is a God, be from the heart believed, and it will produce an immediate effect in your lives and conduct. From the moment that you believe this one truth, it will mix itself with every thing you say and do. You will then perceive the presence of God surrounding you, his eye upon you, his hand over you, his providence ordering every thing concerning you. You will feel, that to him as your Creator, you owe your devoted service; as your Benefactor, your grateful thanks; as your Preserver, your continual trust: that you are his, and ought to live to his glory; and that to him you are accountable for every word and action: that by sin you must provoke his displeasure; and that if you would obtain his favour, you must diligently seek him. O, how many wholesome and blessed effects would follow the *heart-felt belief* of this first principle of religion—that there is a God!

It is not necessary, perhaps, to make a distinction between practical Atheists, and practical Infidels. Yet there are some, who not only acknowledge the being of a God in words, but also have some fear of him, and pay some attention to the duties of religion:

who nevertheless, though they admit the truth of the gospel, make no use whatever of Jesus Christ. They call themselves Christians, and subjoin the name of Christ to their prayers; but as to the peace of their consciences, and their hope towards God, they place no more dependance on Christ than they do on Mahomet. Their duties are what they look to. If conscience troubles them with the sense of sin, they will find some good thing to set against the bad. Thus they establish a righteousness of their own, and do not submit to the righteousness of Christ. They feel sin as an occasional act; but sin, as the disease of their nature, they do not feel. Hence, though sometimes troubled, because they are not so good as they should be; they can comfort themselves by their duties and pious resolutions. And if, on the whole, they live as virtuously as those around them, they are satisfied.

And is this Christianity, which has nothing of Christ in it? Ought not you to have a real union with him? Ought he not to be precious to you? Ought you not to abide in him, and to have him dwelling in your hearts by faith; so that you may be rooted and grounded in love, and be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and

depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God? It is no wonder that you, who make so slight a matter of faith in Jesus Christ, should love to consider the views and prospects which the gospel affords, as uncertain and doubtful; something like those which the mere light of nature and conscience may afford to the Deist. For, in fact, you do not advance much further than he. Christ is little more than a name to you. Sensible communion with him, joy and peace in believing, you do not even seek after; nay, you are pleased to regard every thing which looks like assurance, as presumption; and think it better and more humble for a man to continue in doubt, as to his spiritual state. The real reason of all this is, that a *strong spirit of Infidelity* does secretly possess your mind. Every truth of revelation is faintly received, and not realized by you. Heaven, hell, sin, eternal judgment: these great objects, on which so much is said in Scripture, are superficially viewed. Your conscience has never been duly awakened, nor you stirred up to flee from the wrath to come; else Christ would be precious to you, and you would fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you. You do not even believe the law with a

realizing faith, else it would convince you of sin, and be a school-master to lead you to Christ.

Yet some there are, who, though they feel the bondage and misery of the law, are slow to believe in Christ, and to come into the glorious liberty of the children of God. They are burdened with sin, and yet refuse the only remedy. They will not hear the Saviour say to them, "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." They stand at a distance through unbelief; and are still looking for something in themselves which may make them more fit to come to Christ. Why, my brethren, why do you turn away from the mercy which God offers you? Behold the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness! Arise, why tarry you? Wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord. Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world! Return to him, and yours shall be taken away—your guilt removed—your conscience disburdened of its load. Are not these glad-tidings? They are not more glad than true: for it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You feel yourselves to be of that number; go then to him; believe in him; and you shall be saved.

And you who have believed in Christ, and have found peace in believing in him, see that you hold fast your confidence and rejoicing of hope. "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Remember that he alone has the words of eternal life. When you abide in him, and his words abide in you, eternal life is yours. It is your privilege to know that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God, being taught that great truth, not by flesh and blood, but by your Father which is in heaven. To abide in him you will find to be the true secret of holiness. In proportion to the simplicity with which you trust in him, will be your fruitfulness in every good word and work. The more you consider yourselves as justified freely by grace, the more will the love of Christ constrain you; and you will judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again. O, my dear brethren, may you thus know him, and thus walk in him; till at last you be with him where he is, and behold his glory!

SERMON IX.

Job, xv. 14, 15, 16.

What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

ALTHOUGH the three friends of Job, who alternately discoursed and reasoned with him in the hour of his affliction, were mistaken as to his character, and the intention of God's dealings with him; yet they appear not to have been unacquainted with several very important parts of divine truth. Even in that early age, when all around was dark idolatry,

and when as yet, perhaps, no part of the Scripture was written, they seem to have understood the true character of man, and something also of the divine nature: and from time to time they deliver sentiments at once just and sublime. In short, their principles seem in general to be sound, though the conclusions which they draw from them are often erroneous. That God is holy, just, and good; that he does not afflict without cause; that man is perverse and rebellious, and deserves the chastisement he receives at the hand of God; all this is perfectly right. But when they conclude that those who are visited with suffering must be hypocrites, they greatly err, and prove themselves anacquainted with the methods of the Most High in dealing with the children of men. Their mistaken conclusions are corrected at the end of the book; and in the mean time we may avail ourselves of those sublime views of God, and faithful representations of man, with which they occasionally present us.

Of this description is the passage read for the text; which, with the blessing of God, may afford us matter for profitable meditation. It shews us the necessity and suitableness of one of the most important parts of the Christian character—*Humility*. It points out to us

the reasons why man ought to humble himself in the presence of God.

These reasons are two.

I. The first is drawn from the origin and character of man.

II. The second from the nature and perfections of God.

The first reason is drawn from the origin and character of man. "What is man that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" In these words, "he that is born of a woman," the inspired writer no doubt intended to remind man of the frail and feeble texture of his frame, as a ground, on account of which he should be humble, and not think that any pretensions to worth or righteousness belonged to so weak and perishing a worm. That such considerations entered into the sacred penman's meaning, may be inferred from several other passages parallel to the text. Thus in the 4th chapter, after asking, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall man be more pure than his Maker?" He adds, "Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?" So again in the 25th chapter,

"How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight: how much less man, that is a worm; and the son of man, which is a worm?" In all these passages, we see that the writer thinks it reasonable, that man should disclaim all pretensions to excellency, and abase himself before the majesty and holiness of God, on account of his being such a frail and perishing creature; born of a woman; dwelling in houses of clay; a worm; and crushed before the moth.

This is a sentiment both reasonable in itself, and recognized by all holy characters. Thus Abraham, when interceding for Sodom, reflects on his own insignificance with a feeling of self-abasement; and as if it were presumption in such an one to open his mouth unto God. "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." Now if the bare consideration of his origin should suggest these lowly thoughts; if man that is born of a woman should humble himself before his God, because he is of few days and full of misery; how much more should this be the case, when that same origin may remind him, not only how feeble and

short-lived he is, but also how sinful and defiled? If the days of man were still fewer, and his frame still more feeble than it is: if he were literally like the flower which cometh up in the morning, and in the evening is cut down and withered; still, if he were innocent, he might, with not an unwarrantable boldness appear before his God: for though he must in that case strongly feel the *dependance of a creature*, he would not be required to feel the *abasement of a sinner*.

But alas! he that is born of a woman, is also born in sin, and conceived in iniquity. "Who can bring a clean thing out an unclean?" Man is depraved by nature; as he grows up his evil propensities discover themselves: he runs into every excess of riot; or, as the text emphatically expresses it, "drinketh iniquity like water." With what eagerness does the hot and parched traveller pant after the water-brooks, and with what delight does he drink the refreshing draught? Thus does man thirst after sinful gratifications, and with such satisfaction does he drink iniquity!

This humbling truth is proved by fact. How full is the world of every kind of sin! Look around—what drunkenness and riot, what uncleanness and lasciviousness, what fraud, what extortion, what falsehood, and guile,

what violence and injustice, what profane cursing and swearing, and what violation of God's holy Sabbath, abound on every side! And with what eagerness do men follow these things; as if they had given themselves up to work all uncleanness with greediness!

But perhaps the aptness of man to drink iniquity like water, appears in nothing more than in the intercourse of common conversation. "Out of the fulness of the heart, the mouth speaketh." And how seldom does the heart prompt to such discourse as is good to the use of edifying, and which may minister grace to the hearers! Or if such discourse is introduced, it is received as unseasonable; and it soon drops, no one being ready to take it up. But, now, let it be evil communication, and it will not want supporters. If it be a tale of slander, it is heard with acceptance, and goes round the company, to the common entertainment of all. Or if, among loose and debauched characters, but a word is uttered which alludes to their favourite indulgence, the most distant hint is immediately understood, the eye glistens, the countenance brightens, and every look declares with what eagerness filthy communication is drunk in.

Thus, whether we consider the origin or character of man, we shall see abundant rea-

son why he should humble himself before his Maker. And this will still more appear, from the further consideration of the nature and perfections of God.

II. The holiness of the divine nature is thus expressed in the text. "Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; how much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" By saints is meant sanctified ones; it may be applied to angels or men: in the text, it seems rather to be intended of angels. It may readily be allowed, that these expressions are figurative: not that there is, in holy angels, any real impurity, or actual sin; but, compared with the infinite perfection of God, their wisdom is folly; their light, darkness.

Holiness is in its own nature the same, whether in man, in angel, or in God himself; but we may consider it as existing in three different modes. It may be mixed with sin; or it may be unmixed with sin, but limited in degree; or lastly, it may be both unmixed and unlimited. And thus it is, that holy men differ from angels in one respect; and holy angels differ from God in another. The difference between men and angels is, that in men holiness, though real, is ever defiled

with sin: whereas, in angels, the measure of holiness which they possess is unmixed, but that measure is limited: in God it is infinite. The properties of holiness are the same in all, but in degree they differ. One of the properties of holiness is hatred of sin. A holy angel views sin with abhorrence. He sees the evil which is in it, and it is hateful in his sight; but his hatred of sin, and his knowledge of its evil nature, cannot be compared with that which God possesses. So again, a holy angel, while he hates sin, pities sinners, mourns over their obstinacy and destruction, rejoices in their conversion. But here, again, this benevolent compassion is not to be compared with the compassion which is in God. In the angel, both the abhorrence and the pity have their bounds; but in God, holy displeasure and holy compassion are both infinite, and both resulting from the infinite perfection of his nature.

And thus it is with every other holy attribute. But I have mentioned hatred of sin particularly; because it more immediately belongs to the subject before us. It is the consideration of this which is peculiarly favourable to humility, and which shews how suitable it is that a sinful man should abase himself in the presence of God. The reason

why men continue stout-hearted and unhumbled is, that they do not see that God is so holy, and has such a perfect hatred of sin. They do not look upon him as of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; but think that he is even such an one as themselves. They say, "Thou, God, seest not;" or, "Thou, God, carest not for it." O, if they did but reflect on the infinite purity of God, that the very heavens are not clean in his sight, and that he charges his angels with folly; they would feel that it is not added without reason, "how abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water!" Job himself was in this way taught true humility; it was by discovering the holiness and perfection of the divine nature: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And whenever any person possesses a just sense of the sanctity of the divine nature, it will enhance the humiliation and self-abhorrence with which he contemplates his own defilement. He will be led to say: 'if even my purblind eye can discover so much sin and pollution in this depraved heart, what must the pure and all-seeing eye of God behold? And if a sinful man like myself can feel a displeasure against sin, from a

sense of its hateful nature; what must be the displeasure felt by a holy God, who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all?'

Now, since God is so holy, and man so sinful; it might be thought that such a God would have nothing to do with his corrupt and rebellious creatures, but would cast them off with abhorrence. But not so. He has devised a way for their recovery. He has himself found a ransom, and made provision in the economy of grace to restore them to his favour and his image. And here another view of the subject which we have been considering opens upon us. The sinfulness of man, compared with the holiness of God, serves to display more clearly,

The riches of divine mercy. And,

The power of divine grace.

The very fact, that God is a hater of sin, shews the greatness of his love to sinners; so that there is encouragement from that attribute of the Almighty, which is most forbidding, viz. his holiness. It might have required but little love for a Being who had light thoughts of sin, to pardon it. Such a Being, not feeling the great evil of sin, might have overlooked or excused it, though the principle of benevolence in him was weak But when a holy and jealous God, who hates

sin with perfect hatred, devises means by which he may receive sinners into favour; we may be sure that this must arise from the powerful constraint of an abundant and overflowing goodness. The great difficulty in this case is, how a sinful creature can have access to such a God at all; but when this obstacle is removed, and the way made open, then what the sinner may expect from such a God, is to be measured by the greatness of his love; and the measure of that love may well be taken from the greatness of the obstacles which it has overcome. It has overcome all the objections arising from the divine justice and holiness; not by *sacrificing* them *to* mercy; but by *reconciling* them *with* mercy. The love of God has abounded in all wisdom and prudence; devising a way in which justice and mercy can at the same time be displayed; and God be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Let not, then, the trembling and penitent sinner be discouraged, when he reflects on the holy character of that God with whom he has to do. For as his holiness is infinite, so is his loving-kindness also. He would have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. He has declared, nay he has sworn, that he has no pleasure in the death of the

wicked, "but that the wicked turn from his way and live." He feels, indeed, displeasure against sin, heavy displeasure; and if the sinner go on in his iniquity, and will not turn, that displeasure must light upon him in dreadful vengeance. But this is his own fault. God waits to be gracious, invites him to return, and even pleads and expostulates with him. O, the love of God! O, the perverseness of men! That such kindness from a holy God should be offered in vain; that he should call, and they refuse; that he should stretch out his hands, and no man regard! Be not you, my brethren, so foolish and unwise; but "seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." If you seek, you shall not seek in vain: for the very existence of mercy in a God whose hatred of sin is infinite, shews that his benevolence is infinite also.

Nor are the *riches* of divine *mercy* only displayed by the truths which we have been considering; but moreover the *power* of divine *grace* is hereby illustrated. One of the greatest and most wonderful exertions of Almighty power, is that secret operation on the minds of men, by which he enlightens the understanding, and changes the will itself; quickening those who were dead in trespasses and

sins, so that they hate what they once loved, and love what they once hated. To see a man who not only committed sin, but committed it with greediness, "drinking iniquity like water;" to see such an one changed, become a new man; loving the holy law of God, and walking in his commandments and ordinances; to see the divine image gradually forming in one who once bore the image of Satan; this is, indeed, a glorious effect of Almighty grace, and worthy of him whose mercy can cancel the deepest guilt, and whose Spirit can cleanse the most corrupted heart.

In conclusion, I shall sum up what has been said in two or three practical remarks. The primary instruction of the text is to teach man just views of himself and of God; that when he sees his own defilement, together with God's holiness, he may be abased in his own sight, and repent in dust and ashes. This humble conviction lies at the root of all true religion. There can be no real piety without it. And those persons are equally strangers to themselves and God, who think well of themselves, and imagine that though they have their faults, yet their hearts are good. Alas! such persons do but deceive themselves. They flatter themselves in their own sight, till their iniquity be found to be hateful. And

hateful, sooner or later, it will be found to be. Though now they may love it, and drink it like water; the time will come, when it will be found to be the bitter water which causeth the curse. The very first step in true religion is for a man to despair of his own righteousness, or his own strength; and to cast himself entirely on the mercy and grace of God.

We have seen that this mercy and grace are both illustrated by the considerations which have been set forth. I have nothing, therefore, further to add, than to remind every individual, that in these two things consists salvation, in mercy and grace. If you would be saved, you must have your sins forgiven through the mercy of God, and must be justified freely by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. And also, if you would be saved, you must be sanctified by God's holy Spirit, and by that Spirit be taught and enabled to mortify the deeds of the body. Bear in mind these two things: *redemption* through the *blood* of Christ; *sanctification* through his *Spirit*. Both are necessary for a fallen, corrupt creature, who would become acceptable to a holy God. Both are necessary for you. I beseech you, therefore, to seek them. Let not this day pass over your heads without earnest prayer for mercy and grace. Seek

mercy and grace for yourselves; and, as you have opportunity, exhort every man his brother, and every man his neighbour, to seek mercy and grace also. Who knoweth, but you may save your brother or your friend? But if not, by thus doing you will at least deliver your own soul.

SERMON X.

MARK, ix. 23, 24.

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.

AS faith in Jesus Christ is the principle on which salvation is suspended; so we are instructed in its nature and properties, with a care proportioned to its importance. Nor is it a principle difficult to be understood, though it may be difficult to be defined. Its very simplicity makes it so. There is scarcely any thing more hard to explain, than that which can be comprehended by every one without explanation. Love, hope, joy, faith, are not

very easily defined with accuracy; yet, every one knows what is meant by loving and hating, by hoping and fearing, by rejoicing and grieving, by believing and disbelieving. Instead, therefore, of those nice definitions of faith, by which men often make a very plain thing very obscure; the Scriptures bring before us examples of persons whose faith is commended and rewarded. When we see what they did who obtained the praise and the recompense of faith, we cannot be doubtful what it is to believe.

Look, then, at those persons who experienced the healing power of our Lord in the days of his flesh. We are told that they believed, and according to their faith it was done to them. What, then, did they do? They expected from Christ that very thing which they obtained; and they expected it, although appearances were against their success. The poor woman who laboured under an issue of blood, had spent all her money on physicians, yet received no benefit. Here was great discouragement: yet she was so confident of healing virtue in Christ, that she said in her heart, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." Martha, the sister of Lazarus, expressed her faith, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died; but I

know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

To mention no more instances, the case before us is a very striking one. An unhappy father, whose son had been long afflicted with a dumb spirit, applied to the disciples of Christ for relief; but in vain. They could not cast the spirit out. This, his unsuccessful application, he reported to Christ; who, reproving the multitude and the scribes, and perhaps his disciples also, for their want of faith, ordered the youth to be brought to him. On his appearing, the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming. This the parent represented as having been the case from his childhood; and that perpetual fears were entertained for his life; since, in the moment of his frenzy, he would plunge into the water, or rush into the flame. In this distress, he applies to Christ. His case had been rendered hopeless, by the long continuance of the malady; and the disciples had been applied to in vain. But one thing remains, and that is, to try what the master himself can do. The moment is critical; his emotions various and fluctuating. He comes to Christ, half doubting, half believing. He believes, but not without wavering; he doubts, yet not without hope.

Christ sees the tumult of his mind, and encourages him, while he reproves his unbelief. The poor man had said, "if thou canst do any thing." Christ says, "if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth:" thus tenderly shewing him, that the only hindrance lay in his weakness of faith; none in the difficulty of the case. The anxious parent acknowledges the justice of the reproof, and receives the comfort of the encouragement. He ventures to avow his faith, and begs assistance under the infirmity of it. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

As our blessed Lord has made this subject of general concern, by stating universally that "all things are possible to him that believeth," we may find it useful to ourselves, if we consider,

I. The essential character and usual accompaniments of faith.

II. The manner in which Christ has connected believing and receiving.

Faith is a persuasion that Jesus Christ is able and willing to do the things which we desire of him. It believes him to be, what he really is, the Son of God, God and yet man. It believes him to have done what he really has accomplished; to have made a sufficient sacrifice for sin, to have died for our offences,

to have risen again for our justification, to be at the right hand of God, ever living to make intercession for us; and, therefore, able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him.

Now in proportion as we really believe that Christ is what we confess him to be, and has done what we ascribe to him, we shall expect to receive those several blessings which he came into the world to give, and which he died and rose again for the very purpose of bestowing. Are our souls bowed down with the sense of guilt? Is pardon the thing which we long for? And do we believe that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins? Then we shall expect on applying to him to obtain that very thing: and though our sins be many, if our faith is strong, the sight of them will not deter us, but make us love more that Saviour who forgives many sins. Are we groaning under the bondage of corruption? Do we feel the flesh lusting against the spirit; and is the conflict hard and doubtful? If we believe that Christ is able to do for us, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, we shall expect from him that he will sanctify us body, soul, and spirit; and however strong and inveterate our sins may be, we shall not despondingly say, "I shall one day perish by

the hand of Saul;" but when we feel ourselves weak, we shall expect his strength to be made perfect in our weakness, so that we may be made conquerors, and more than conquerors through him that loved us. Thus as the Psalmist says, "they that know thy name will put their trust in thee." As far as we know Christ to be what he is, so mighty and so willing to save; so faithful and so merciful a high priest, we shall be able to say with St. Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Such is the essential character of faith, which is moreover attended by certain accompaniments which must not be overlooked. By these I do not mean the general evidences and fruits of faith, but the acting of it; not the change of heart which it produces, but its own perceptible workings in the heart. These I conceive are well expressed in the words of the parent in the text; "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Hence it appears, that the man who believes is, for the most part, conscious of his faith in the very act of believing. It is much to be doubted, whether there is any act of the mind of which it is not sensible. If a man loves, he knows it; if he hates, he knows it also; he that hopes is conscious

of his hope, and he that rejoices of his joy. So when a man believes, trusts, reposes confidence in another, he is sensible that he does so. Especially this is the case if the affection be strong. A weak love may be scarcely discernible in its actings, a faint hatred may lurk unperceived; but strong emotions cannot exist without being felt. He who said with *tears*, "Lord, I believe," shewed by his tears the vehemence and tenderness of his emotion. The faith which he avowed he felt, and avowed it because he felt it.

Yet, though he was sensible of his faith, he was conscious also of its infirmity: so conscious, that he hardly knows whether to call it faith or unbelief. "I believe," he cries; yet almost at the same moment, "help mine unbelief." When he remembered that Christ was the Son of God that should come into the world, he had no doubt of his power, and was well persuaded that he would heal his son. Again, when the inveteracy of the disease occurred to his mind, his heart misgave him, and he doubted. His doubting shewed that his faith was weak; his coming to Christ in so hopeless a case, argued even strength of faith. And thus it is; even strong faith is liable to be assailed with doubts, as the brightest sun may be obscured with clouds. The faith of Abra-

ham himself, on some occasions, wavers; and the disciples of our Lord who had forsaken all and followed him, were often reduced to doubting, and reproved for their little faith. It is for our comfort to know, that if we have faith, though it be mixed with doubting, we we may carry both our faith and our unbelief to Christ; we may plead, Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief, and our faith will be accepted, our unbelief pardoned.

Having thus shewn the essential character and usual accompaniments of faith, we may proceed to consider,

II. The manner in which Christ has connected believing and receiving.

Where faith exists, there is nothing too great to be obtained by it. If this faith does not obtain from Christ the very greatest worldly and temporal advantages; if it does not procure for believers large possessions, crowns and sceptres; if it does not give wealth to those who are poor among them; or soundness of body to those who are sick; if it does not do these things, it is not because such gifts are either too great, or too difficult to be granted to faith; but that these are not suitable blessings. A measure even of these things, according to the will of God, is often given in answer to the prayer of faith; but if the Lord

more commonly suffers those who trust in him, to be in low afflicted circumstances; we are not to judge by sense, or by the sight of the eye. If the very greatest of these things were really good for the believer, faith could obtain it at the hands of Christ. It is easy with him to lift the beggar from the dung-hill, and to set him among princes. These, however, are not the common rewards of faith, but greater things than these; forgiveness of sin, peace of conscience, favour with God, a new heart, a holy life, joy in the Holy Ghost, a triumphant expectation of death, and a glorious resurrection. These things, which far exceed any earthly good, are utterly out of our own power; but Christ gives them to faith. However far a man may be from them, he need not fear if he seeks them in faith. Hard and easy are words which have no meaning with God. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? As he can call the things which are not, as though they were; so faith, laying hold on his strength, can remove mountains, and cast them into the depths of the sea. There is no temporal blessing which is really for the good of a believer; nor any spiritual blessing, however great, or however hard of attainment, but faith can fetch it down from heaven.

And in proportion to the measure of faith, is the actual benefit received. Where there is no faith, there is no prayer. It may be said to such unbelieving souls, "ye have not because ye ask not." But wherever there is real faith, there is true prayer; and the prayer of faith *always* prevails.

The proportion of this success to the measure of faith, is beautifully illustrated by the manner of Elisha's dealing with Joash, king of Israel. The prophet, on his death-bed, was signifying to this valiant prince, the victories which he should obtain over Syria, even to its final subjugation. "Thou shalt smite" says he, "the Syrians in Aphek, till thou hast consumed them." He then bid the king take arrows, and express, by smiting on the ground, his future triumphs over the Syrians. Joash took the arrows, and smote thrice and stayed; "and the man of God was wroth with him, and said, thou shouldst have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." No doubt the prophet was enabled to see, that this listless smiting proceeded from his faint belief of the promise; otherwise his eager hope and joy would have dictated a more vehement expression of his feelings. It was, therefore, to him accord-

ing to his faith: he smote Syria thrice, and redeemed the cities which his father had lost; but the conquest of Syria was reserved to some generations afterwards, and was effected by Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria.

On the contrary, the success of great faith may be seen in Elijah, who prayed that it might not rain; "and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." Another example of the efficacy of faith we have in Abraham, "who, against hope, believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about one hundred years old; neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to to perform." And according to his faith it was done unto him: "there sprang of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable." The same Lord over all, is rich to all that call upon

him: but some lift up their formal hands without faith; such men will receive nothing of the Lord. Others have some faith mixed with much doubting, and they speed accordingly. It is faith which honours the truth, the love, and all the perfections of God; and the invariable rule is, "according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you."

And now I would apply this whole subject to one thing: the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which you are this day invited to partake of. If there is any thing, the value of which depends upon faith, it is this. Here, my dear brethren, under visible emblems, Christ, in all his saving benefits, is exhibited to you. Here he offers himself to be the spiritual food of your souls, to nourish them unto life eternal. Here is held out to you that bread of life which you may eat, and live for ever. If, while you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do but by faith discern the Lord's body; the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ, whereof you being partakers, are one body in Christ; the cup which we bless the communion of his blood, by which your sins are done away, and you stand washed, cleansed, justified before God. What now say your hearts? Do you believe? Are you conscious of faith? Do you feel it in your

hearts, so that you can each say, "Lord, I believe?" It may be, some of you never questioned your faith all your lives; never suspected any unbelief. Let me then ask you one or two questions. Is your faith a perceptible act; a lowly affection? Do you with tears of sorrow for sin, and gratitude to the Saviour of sinners, cast yourselves on his dying love? Have you peace with God, and the hope of glory? Is Christ precious to you; and are you constrained by his love to live to him? Then you have precious faith. But if your boast of having always believed, amounts to no more than this, that you never doubted; if your conscience is at rest, only because it is unawakened, not because the peace of God reigns there; if faith is with you merely an assent of the understanding, not an affection of the heart; then suffer me to say, that it is but the name of faith, it is not saving faith: with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness.

Most of you to whom I am now speaking, to the daily and hourly proofs of want of faith which you are giving, will add this one more: you will turn your backs on the Lord's table. There is nothing in his death which you love to contemplate. You care not to do any thing in remembrance of him. With you he is but a name. You call him Saviour, but faith in

him for salvation you have none. O, Christians in word only and in form, not in deed and in truth; repent and bring those sin-ruined souls of yours to Christ, if you expect to be saved from eternal death. Draw nigh to him with tears: beg him to help your unbelief, and to make you strong in faith, that you may experience his saving power.

But there are others who will come to the table. Come then, my brethren, come with *humility*: see in the law of God what you should be, and consider what you are; how far, how very far, from that perfect standard! Let both your past offences and present corrupt affections be matter of grief; and let your desire, in approaching the table, be to obtain mercy and grace: mercy to pardon your transgressions, and grace to subdue your sins.

And as Jesus Christ is both able and willing to grant these blessings; come in *faith*, come expecting to receive them at his hands. You ask great things, but you ask them at the hands of one whose love far exceeds your wants. He is rich in mercy, he knows all your desires, sees your sorrows, beholds your tears. He has pardoned greater sinners than you, old sinners who had grown grey in iniquity. He has overcome stronger corruptions which had been long entertained and grown inveterate in the

heart. And in these instances he shews patterns of his long-suffering patience, and of his victorious power, that you may believe and not doubt. Draw near then in faith, and you will depart with salvation. Come, expecting great things. Expect something worthy of divine love to give. If you go away with little, it will be because you look for little. You are not straitened in him, be not straitened in yourselves. Stay not at the third stroke, but smite with your arrows hard and oft, that thus you may smite all the enemies of your salvation, till they are consumed. No doubt you will find many hindrances and discouragements, but rise superior to them by faith. Are your sins many and great, and is your heart apt to sink at the sight? While they are a burden too heavy for you to bear, do you think it would be presumption to conclude that they are forgiven? These are the reasonings of unbelief: many and great as they are, why not believe that they are forgiven? Is not the blood of Christ sufficient to do them all away? Is not his love large enough to pardon the most numerous offences? Come to the table; and when you take the cup, remember the blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins, and for yours among the rest, and believe that it is sufficient for the

remission of your sins also; and though you feel unbelief, plead for help against it; and rest not till you can say (and if you say it with tears, it is well): "Lord, I believe."

But is there nothing which you have to believe for, but pardon? Oh, yes! How many evil dispositions yet remain! Pride to be mortified, lusts to be subdued, self to be renounced, the world to be overcome! How often are you foiled in this contest; and, though you make fresh resolutions, you are again overcome! Learn, then, where your strength lies. Come to Christ: he is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. Beg of him grace to help in every time of need. Whatever you want, he can supply; and however far you may seem from those graces which are essential to the Christian character, he can give you them. Out of the depths, then, cry unto him. He can take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. He can teach you to love God and man, and create in you pure and heavenly affections. Cast yourselves, then, boldly upon him; commit yourselves, such as you are, into his hands; that he may form his own image in you, make you new creatures, and delight in you as the chosen abode of his good Spirit.

There may be present some young persons

who, having been admitted by confirmation to the full communion of the church, are now for the first time about to approach this table of the Lord. To such I would say, in conclusion: You have witnessed a good confession before many witnesses; you have avouched the Lord to be your God; and promised to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil.

May the Lord enable you to perform your vows! But expect not victory, without a contest. The same enemy, who so cruelly tormented the youth whose story is related in the text, desires to have you also, that he may sift you as wheat. And though he do not cast you into the water, or into the fire; he will endeavour to overwhelm you with floods of temptation, and will assault you with his fiery darts. Against this formidable enemy you have no strength in yourselves; but you have a sufficiency of strength in Christ. He knows how to sympathise with those that are tempted, and knows also how to succour them. His compassions never fail; and his power is sufficient to save, in all extremities. When you pass through the waters, he will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.

What do you not owe to such a Saviour? Come, renew your vows; give him all you have and are; present yourselves to him a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his sight. Thus shall you taste his love, walk in the light of his countenance, gain increasing victory over the world and sin, and find his kingdom, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost established in your hearts.

SERMON XI.

2 Timothy, iii. 14—17.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

AN idea was broached in the last century, and obtained some degree of countenance, that children ought not to be instructed in

religion; that principles instilled in early years, before the understanding was competent to decide on their truth or falsehood, could be considered only as prejudices; and that such prejudices were hurtful, as they blinded the judgment in after life. The conclusion formed on these reasonings was, that it was best to wait till the understanding had attained its full maturity; and that then the important subject of religion should be submitted to the unbiassed exercise of its ripened powers.

This specious, but mistaken idea, has been successfully combated; and it has been justly urged by the advocates for early religious instruction, that it is impossible to keep the human intellect in that state of neutrality which the above-mentioned system supposes: that ideas of some sort, either true or false, will make their way into the opening mind; and every wise and good man would surely wish, that the first impressions should be those of truth, not of error; of virtue, not of vice.

Those who have pleaded on this side of the question, have not only the advantage in point of sound argument, but moreover the voice of revelation is decidedly in their favour. Moses, in delivering the law says, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be

in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." This charge the pious Jews seem carefully to have observed: and St. Paul, in the text, reminds Timothy of it as an advantage, that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures. If the holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, the sooner we are put into the way of this wisdom the better. Be thankful, then, you who like Timothy were in your youth instructed in the word of God; continue in the things which you have heard, considering from whom you have received them; and be careful to teach your own children what your parents taught you.

In order to excite you to the more diligent practice of these duties, I shall endeavour to set before you the great excellence of the Scriptures.

I. As inspired of God.

II. As having a manifold utility in perfecting the nature, and thereby ensuring the happiness of man.

I. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. And therefore, as God is a God of truth, and cannot lie, all Scripture is true. In

other books, a man may be very learned, and yet much of his learning be error. This is palpably true in history. To have history free from falsehood, is an advantage not often to be met with: so many causes are there which corrupt the faith of historical records. We may judge of the operation of these causes, by considering the state of France during the reign of Napoleon, when men were forbidden to write any thing but what pleased the Emperor. Was it possible, under such circumstances, for the historians of that country to transmit to posterity a just account of the events of their own time? And the same causes which must render their narratives partial and imperfect, have operated to misrepresent the facts that have been handed down to us by ancient historians. So much so, that one of the most famous of the Roman writers mentions it as a rare felicity, when men can venture to think what they please, and write what they think. In free countries, faction and popular clamour have produced the same effects; and party-spirit has discoloured the records of liberty, as much as fear has disguised those of despotism.

In reading the lives of eminent men, we are under the same disadvantage: partial affection, or undue admiration, or enmity, or

jealousy, may produce an extravagant or a distorted representation: some things may be extenuated, others set down in malice, or omitted through ignorance, or added through wrong information. Then, the reflections which biographers make, in commending or blaming the men whose actions they record, are not always according to truth: they commend sometimes what ought to be blamed, and blame what ought to be commended.

If we come to subjects more immediately connected with religion: the Being, nature, and service of God; we find still greater difficulties. What absurd errors deluded the heathen world! What errors still prevail, where the word of God is forsaken, and the devices of men introduced!

Now, these which I have mentioned are the subjects of which the Bible chiefly treats; but treats of them with this advantage, of delivering its instructions unmixed with error. The knowledge which a man gains from the Bible on these subjects, is real knowledge. And consider how much he knows, who is acquainted with his Bible. As to historical knowledge; the world has existed nearly six thousand years; of these, about three thousand would not have been known at all, had the Scriptures never been given. And the poor man who has no

library, but is well read in the Old Testament, knows as much of that large period as any learned man whatever. The poor man, who reads his Bible, knows what man was when he came out of the hands of his Creator; and how sin entered into the world, and through sin, death. He sees how wickedness increased in the old world, and how judgment followed it, till the whole race of offenders was swept away by one overwhelming visitation; one righteous man, with his wife and family, alone escaping the universal destruction. He knows how, after this tremendous judgment, men still hardened their hearts, and wickedness again prevailed; till God called a righteous man from the East, and separated him and his family from the world lying in wickedness. In the history of Abraham and his posterity, till the time of the carrying away captive to Babylon, every poor man may read a narrative at once interesting and instructive; abounding with wonderful events, and astonishing displays of divine power. He may read the lives of good and holy men; as of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the beautiful and edifying story of the patriarch Joseph; the history of Moses and Joshua; and of the pious kings, David, Hezekiah, and Josiah. In which history are developed the methods of providence

in dealing both with individuals and with nations. Then he who has the Bible in his hands, has, in the Psalms, the best manual of devotions; in the Proverbs, the choicest maxims of wisdom; in the Law and in the Prophets, the most powerful exhortions to righteousness. Above all add, that the Bible teaches the true nature and character of God, the service which he requires, and the means of serving him acceptably. The Saviour, by whose mediation God and man are reconciled, is foretold in the Law and Prophets, in the New Testament evidently set forth crucified before us. His life, his miracles, his preaching, his suffering, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, are all there recorded by eye-witnesses, and written for our instruction, that we may believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and that, believing, we may have life through his name. How unspeakable the advantage, to have truths of so great moment written by inspired pens; so that we do not merely speculate and conjecture what God is, how he is to be served, and what will become of us after death; but know from his own faithful word, what faith and obedience we owe, and what recompense we have to expect.

Having thus shewn the excellency of the Scriptures, as an inspired book, containing

truth without error; it will be easy to see, secondly, that it must have a manifold utility in perfecting the nature, and therefore promoting the happiness of man.

II. Ignorance and sin always go together. When the understanding is deceived by false appearances, the heart is possessed by corrupt passions: and therefore, *in one word*, as soon as we have said that the Bible reveals *truth*, we have attributed to it the only effectual cure of that corruption which is in the world.

But as truth is not confined to one fact only, but extends to many, and those of many kinds; so the effect of truth upon the heart is also manifold.

Each true example of holy men, each true narrative of God's dealings, each true doctrine contained in Scripture, is connected with some Christian virtue, which it is peculiarly adapted to form. If, therefore, I am ignorant of any one doctrine of Scripture, or shut my eyes against it; I must be deficient in that particular grace which it is calculated to produce. And on this account it is, that the knowledge acquired by studying the Scriptures is so valuable. If it only made men more familiar with ancient facts, or qualified them for conversing with ability on nice and intricate subjects; then, indeed, though

a man had all knowledge, and could speak on divine and human things with the tongue of men and angels, he would but be as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. But the great praise of Scripture knowledge is, that it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

I wish this use of the inspired volume were always attended to. For want of duly considering this point, many persons make a wretched use even of the Bible itself; and seek from it a knowledge which may puff them up with pride, rather than a charity that may edify them.

But the Scripture, if duly attended to, is profitable to these great ends; and I beseech every one of you so to use it. Let it speak to your conscience: then it will reprove sin, correct error, and instruct you in all righteousness. And what is there which it is so well worth your while to be instructed in as righteousness? It is the common error of mankind to suppose, that they understand righteousness very well, if they did but practise it. Alas! if you do not practise it, you do not really know it. Besides, instruction in righteousness comprehends not only a de-

claration in what righteousness consists; but how it is to be attained and exercised: as in teaching any trade or science, it is not enough to shew that it is the art of doing this or that, but the instructor must qualify his pupil for actually doing it. And this is the great end of the Scriptures: not only to shew us what righteousness is, but also how we may attain it; as it is expressed in the text, that the man of God may *be perfect*, throughly furnished for all good works.

A man is not furnished to do good works till he is a good man. He must be, as the text informs us, a man of God. This important truth our Lord also teaches, telling us that we must make the tree good, if we would have the fruit good; and that a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Hence, though a man who is living in some known sin, may go to church, or may give alms; it is in vain that he tries to pacify his conscience, and make atonement for his sin, by these things. For, not to mention that no actions, however good, can do away the guilt of sin; no works that such a man does are good works; they may be profitable to men, but they are not pleasing to God. He who sees the heart and tries the reins, cannot be pleased with any action of a man who is living in allowed sin; for he

who loves sin and lives in it, cannot love God. He can therefore do no one action from love to God, or for the glory of God. He may, indeed, do it with a view to please God, but it is for a selfish end; not that God may be served or honoured; but that his own conscience may be quieted, and that he may maintain a favourable opinion of his state.

Is this the case with any here? Are any of you indulging in known or suspected sins? And do you seek to silence the remonstrances of conscience, by some outwardly good actions which you perform? Very poorly instructed in righteousness indeed are you, if you think that this is doing good works. Good works are far higher, and more excellent in their nature, than any thing which in your present state of mind you can perform; and yet even they can make no satisfaction for sin; they are nothing more than the bounden duty of the creature; and the holiest man on earth, after performing the holiest action, must feel that he is an unprofitable servant. How very far wrong, then, must your judgment be, who while you love sin and practise it, can think that your heartless duties may recommend you to the divine favour. Read your Bible, I pray you, that you may be better instructed in righteousness. Thus, in or-

der to a man's being even *capable* of good works, much more in order to his being *throughly furnished* for them, it is necessary that he should be in heart and practice divorced from sin.

Further, he must have a real love to the law of God. Unless he sees and feels the law which he obeys to be good and excellent, he cannot have the approbation of his own heart and judgment in obeying. The holy, just, and good law of God is the perfect standard of right and wrong. A man, therefore, is good, and a man of God, so far as his heart is conformed to this law, and no farther. So far as this is the case, he is a good tree, capable of bearing good fruit; a vessel of honour fitted for the master's use, and ready for every good work.

Lastly, in order to be perfect, throughly furnished for every good work, a man should have a consciousness that his works are accepted. If he doubts this point, he wants one of the greatest encouragements to abound in good works. I do not say, that without this confidence he cannot perform good works; for if he hates sin, and loves the law of God, his works are good; though he, through the strong sense of infirmity, and through the weakness of his faith, questions their accep-

tance. But though, in this state, a man may be *capable* of performing good works; yet he is not *perfect, throughly furnished* for them. In order to this completeness in Christ, the spirit of bondage must depart, and the spirit of adoption crying, Abba, Father, take possession of his soul. The love of God must be shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given to him.

This is the Scripture *order* of obedience; *first* to believe the love of God freely shewn to us, and in the sense of that love to be serving him religiously in all good works.

And is there any thing in the world, more happy or more excellent, than the man who does this? Who, at peace with God and his own conscience; not by his own duties, but by a better righteousness than his own, even the everlasting righteousness brought in by his Saviour; and looking forward to the eternal enjoyment of his presence; considers himself as a stranger and a pilgrim here; and as placed here, in order that he may do the will of his Father, and promote his glory. The law which he is required to obey, is a law that he loves; he delights in it after the inward man; and the good works which he is called to perform, are such as he rejoices to do. How sincere is the obedience of such

a man! How impartial, how universal! How happy is he in himself, while, after the pattern of his Saviour, he goes about doing good; and what a blessing is he to society! This, this, my brethren, is the righteousness which the Bible teaches, first in the heart, then in the life; beginning by faith, and working by love. O, that all here present may read this blessed book with diligence and prayer, till they are thus instructed in righteousness, and throughly furnished for all good works!

Therefore, in the practical advice with which I would conclude this discourse, my first exhortation is—Read the Bible. Let not a day, if possible, pass over your heads without reading and praying over some portion of it. The time of many must, of course, be very much occupied in worldly business; but there are few who have not some time which they may redeem for this purpose. This is, of all others, the most likely way to grow in grace, and to make your souls like watered gardens, fresh and fruitful. Who was ever more holy than the psalmist David; and who delighted more in the Scriptures than he? "How I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day!" If he so delighted in the *law*, how would he have gloried in the *gospel?* If what he saw of Christ in types and shadows,

so refreshed his soul, how would he have prized the record of his ministry and mighty works, of his death and resurrection? In the very first of his psalms is given such a description of the blessedness which attends a diligent study of the Scriptures, that every one who considers it must see how happy in themselves, and how blessed of God they are, who are occupied in his testimonies. Blessed is the man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

2. Teach your children the Scriptures. Do this constantly. Let there be no book which they know so well as the Bible. Teach them other useful things; but think it a shame to have them instructed carefully in other things, and superficially in that in which their eternal interest is concerned. Yet do not make this study irksome to them, by urging it upon them more than they can bear. Let it not be the burden of any day, but a part of the work of every day.

Lastly, as much as you can, lend your influence to promote the reading, and the circulation of the Scriptures amongst others. Among

the poor, the exertion of this influence is most required. Many of the poor cannot read; some who are able to read, can scarcely afford to buy a Bible. There are two things, therefore, which every one who wishes to make the reading of the Scriptures general, will try to promote among the poor: he will endeavour to make the talent of reading more common, and the possession of Bibles more general.

Among the many extraordinary things which distinguish the present day, are two Institutions, which, though perfectly distinct and unconnected, I may consider as contributing their combined influence to make the Bible well known throughout the land. The one is an Institution to teach the children of the poor to read, the other an Institution to supply them with Bibles and Testaments. Those who know the value of the Scriptures themselves, will, no doubt, be disposed to lend a helping hand to these most beneficial efforts of men, who have seen the true interests of society, and of the human race. Who, that is zealous of good works, can help seeing, that here is a field open, in which his zeal for God, and his charity to man, may have large scope? Persuaded as I am, that ignorance is the

parent of sin, I greatly rejoice in the astonishing and unexampled success which has attended both these Institutions; especially that which has for its object the circulation of the Scriptures. I trust the day is approaching, when the knowledge and the fear of God shall prevail far more universally, than it has ever yet done. The signs of the times very strongly favour this delightful hope; and Christians should be ready to help forward by their prayers, their substance, and their influence, every thing which may tend to make men better acquainted with the holy Scriptures, and, therefore, better instructed in righteousness.

SERMON XII.

Exodus, xxxiv. 28, 29.

And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water: and He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, (when he came down from the mount) that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while He talked with him.

IN the extraordinary history of Moses there is scarcely any circumstance more striking and instructive, than his second tarrying on the mount, after the sin of the golden calf,

and his breaking the first tables. There is much, indeed, in this narrative which is beyond our imitation, and which cannot be proposed to us as an example; but there is also much, from which we may derive the most valuable lessons of instruction. Without further preface, I shall enter on the subject; beseeching you to attend with serious minds, and imploring the divine blessing, both to enable me to speak agreeably to the word of truth, and to convey to all your hearts what shall be spoken.

It will be necessary to take a brief view of the transaction as recorded in the text, before we proceed to make any practical remarks. In doing this, three things offer themselves to our contemplation.

I. The manner in which Moses was employed during his stay on the mount.

II. The divine communications with which he was then favoured. And,

III. The glory of his appearance on his descent.

I. With respect to the manner in which he was employed on this, as on the former occasion, during the whole period of Moses's continuance on the mount, he observed the most strict abstinence. For forty days and forty nights he neither did eat bread nor drink

water. We may, therefore, most reasonably conclude that this memorable time was chiefly employed in exercises of devotion. We learn from Scripture, that as fasting was frequently used as a help to prayer; so this was especially the case when some extraordinary blessing was to be asked; or in times of great trouble and difficulty.

Such were the circumstances under which Moses appeared before the Lord upon the mount. The people had sinned a great sin; the Lord had threatened that he would not go up in the midst of them. But he is a merciful God, slow to anger, and of great mercy. He had graciously heard the intercession of Moses recorded in the foregoing chapter, and Moses was encouraged to hope that the divine presence would not be withdrawn. He does not, however, intermit his prayers; but on the mount, before God, urges his persevering suit. "O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance."

And as this his prayer is recorded, so from the usual connexion between prayer and fasting, we may most reasonably conclude that the retirement of Moses on the mount was chiefly employed in holy exercises of devotion.

Nor were those exercises unattended with peculiar marks of divine favour.

II. These we were in the second place to consider.

And they were very great: for the Lord manifested to him his glory; renewed the promise of driving out the inhabitants of Canaan before Israel; and wrote anew on the tables of stone, which Moses had hewed out, the ten commandments.

The Lord manifested his glory to Moses, by revealing to him his name. For the glory of God is his nature, his character. It is his glory, not only that he dwells in the high and holy place in light unapproachable; but also, and chiefly, that he is, as he on this occasion discovered himself to Moses, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. No doubt, when the Lord discovered himself in this glorious character, the soul of Moses was filled with awful delight and reverent love. He made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped; then he uttered the prayer above-mentioned: and a further token of divine favour was given him in the declaration of God that he would

make a covenant and do marvels before all the people, such as had not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and that he would drive out before Israel, the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. And lastly, at the conclusion of the forty days, he wrote on the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Never was a law given to any people under circumstances so extraordinary. Other legislators travelled into countries more civilized than their own, and brought thence into their own country the institutions which they had learned abroad: but the children of Israel saw their Law-giver ascend the mount; and beheld the cloud, the symbol of the divine presence, resting on the mount; and waited his return with the tables in his hand, written with the finger of God.

Such were the tokens of divine favour shewn to Moses during his sojourning on the mount. Nor was less honour put upon him on his descent to the people. When he came down with the tables in his hand, the skin of his face shone. He himself was unconscious of this distinction; but Aaron and the people saw it, and were afraid. So dazzling was that glory, that they durst not come nigh him; and

therefore while Moses talked with them, he put a veil on his face. When he went in before the Lord, he took the veil off; but when he returned to the people, he again covered his face with a veil. Such are the materials which this extraordinary event affords for our instruction. Oh! that we may be enabled to penetrate into its full meaning, and derive from it the important lessons which it is calculated to convey.

And, 1st, We learn from the subject, that all solid attainments in religion must proceed from converse with God. It is by retirement from the world, and calling upon God in secret prayer, that progress in real holiness is to be made. Here the soul is to be bowed low in humility; pardon and peace, through Jesus Christ, and the spirit of adoption, must here be sought. Here, trust in God is to be exercised; here must we learn to cast upon God our cares, and put away tormenting fears; here must patience be learned; here hope confirmed; and here must be acquired temperance, meekness, charity, heavenly mindedness, and strength and wisdom to discharge with diligence and success the active duties of our respective stations. In short, as Moses on the mount received the commandments; so in the mount it must be, that those

same commandments must be written on the fleshly tables of our hearts by the spirit of the living God. This consideration is of great value. It not only shews us *how* to *acquire* Christian graces: but also affords a sure method of judging of such as we may think that we possess. For if all solid attainments must be learned by prayer, it follows that all attainments, however specious and showy, which do not proceed from secret communion with God, are of a questionable nature. They are either the delusive glare of wild-fire; or the intemperate heat of zeal without knowledge; or the cold lamp of head-knowledge, without affection; or whatever they be, and however they may glitter in the eyes of men, depend upon it, the whole is a false lustre; it is only a varnish of earthly composition spread over the face below, not a reflection of the divine glory caught from above.

As I have already drawn from the text one distinction between genuine and counterfeit graces; which is, that genuine graces are communicated and sustained by prayer, while false graces can flourish without it; suffer me to mention another, which is also suggested by the subject.

When God, in answer to prayer, causes all his goodness to pass before the soul, and re-

veals his glorious name, the never-failing consequence is humility. Moses, when he saw this glory of God, immediately fell upon his face and worshipped. You are greatly mistaken, if you suppose that divine communications and real growth in holiness will afford you much to admire in yourselves. When Moses came down from the mount, he wist not that the skin of his face shone. The more genuine the grace is which men possess, the more apt are they to be unconscious of their attainments. It must be so. When men contemplate a holy God, though in that very act they are transformed into his image; yet in the light of that perfect uncreated beauty, they see more clearly their own deformity. Hence low thoughts of themselves, and a willingness to be thought men of low attainments by others. Moses, when he spoke to the people, put a veil on his face. This, indeed, emblematically signifies the darkness of the ceremonial dispensation, through which the glory of the gospel shone indeed, but shone obscured and disguised under the covering of carnal ordinances. But hereby is also aptly represented the unostentatious nature of real piety. A true believer feels that there is nothing in the world so excellent and so honourable as pure religion. But though

he endeavours to approve himself before God, he is afraid of doing his works to be seen of men. Instead of courting admiration, he would, as far as is consistent with duty, hide himself from the view of man, and look for his reward from him who seeth in secret.

2. The forty days fast of Moses was, no doubt, supernatural. In thus fasting, he was a type of Jesus Christ, who fasted the same number of days, and probably in the same wilderness. But though both this fast, and that of our Lord, were extraordinary and miraculous, and cannot be proposed for our imitation; we may, nevertheless, learn both from the one and from the other, that eminent heights of holiness, and intimate manifestations of divine glory and favour, cannot be enjoyed without great abstraction from the world and from sensual enjoyments; nor without deep and habitual communion with God.

There can be no doubt, but that the circumstance of forty days having been thus spent in fasting by Moses, Elias, and Jesus Christ, has given rise to the forty days of Lent; not with the intention that any should attempt the impracticable task of equalling such extraordinary abstinence; but in the

hope that many might, during these forty days, aim at a greater abstraction from the world, a deeper mortification, and a larger measure of devotion, in imitation of these great examples.

It is true, the religion of Jesus Christ is not a religion of meats and drinks, nor does it consist in the observance of days. It is the religion of the heart. It does not tie men down to those severe outward rules, which instead of helping, do rather hinder and embarrass its free spirit. If the *sabbath* was made for man, much more may all times and seasons, of mere human institution, be considered as subordinate; so that every man should feel himself at liberty in the sight of God, to observe them or observe them not, as in his own conscience may appear to him most conducive to his real advancement in holiness. If, on a fair consideration of the subject, the observance of the day would be inconvenient, and more likely to hinder than advance his sanctification; no man should judge him in respect of meat, or drink, or a holy-day. If, on the other hand, no reasonable objection appeared; then, to any one who was disposed to decline the duty, the question might fairly be asked, why not fast to-day as well as another day? It is to be taken for

granted, that true Christians do fast, as well as perform other duties of religion. If, indeed, any particular day be inconvenient, they are not tied to that day. But if they mean entirely to decline the duty itself, let them read what our Lord says on the subject of fasting in his sermon on the mount, and then ask their own hearts, why they forbear to practice a duty, of which he makes such honourable mention.

It is not, indeed, wise to push examples of severity and mortification to too great a length; I am aware that the times have been, when much mischief has been done in the church by this *will worship*, and *artificial sanctity*. To propose that the forty days of Lent should be so observed, as that they should be forty days of penance, would be far from expedient. It would gender to bondage, whereas we are called to liberty. We must remember, however, not to use our liberty for an occasion to the flesh; we are not to suppose that every thing which thwarts our inclination is bondage; nor to imagine that our lusts can be mortified, and holiness attained, without the use of scriptural means. We cannot, it is true, like Moses, or Elias, or Jesus Christ, fast forty days and forty nights; we cannot spend forty days and forty nights

in unremitted exercises of prayer. But can we, therefore, do nothing? If we cannot fast forty days, can we not find a day or two out of the forty, in which to humble our souls with fasting? If we cannot spend forty *days* in prayer, can we not so employ forty *hours* out of the forty days? There are few, I believe, who cannot do thus much; yet, I will venture to say, that this, if done with a serious, humble, and sincere spirit, will not be in vain. Those who have more leisure, should certainly dedicate more time to this sacred work. But whoever faithfully devotes forty hours during these forty days, to real spiritual converse with God; especially, if on some particular days he further enlarges his devotion with solemn fasting; will undoubtedly make a progress in holiness. He who thus passes his Lent, takes the true method to have his face shine at Easter. I here, therefore, on the commencement of Lent, invite you thus to prepare yourselves to keep the pascal feast. If you do so faithfully and diligently, I dare venture to say, that you will celebrate that festival with proportionably greater joy and gratitude; and, if we live till that time, I purpose then to remind you of the exhortation I have this day given; and to appeal to your own hearts how far you

have attended to the admonition, and with what effect.

I know there is nothing more difficult than to persuade men to vigorous exercises of prayer and other spiritual duties. The generality content themselves with a mere form; and even those who know something of true religion are apt to give way to the spirit of slumber, and to go on for a long time in a cold, heartless manner. Then, when exhorted to better things, this very deadness of their spirits is urged as an argument against aspiring after a more lively frame. They cannot pray: when they attempt it, their thoughts wander to the ends of the earth: their hearts seem altogether cold, and void of love or any holy affection. This, I believe, has often been the case, even with good men; yet they never thought it a reason, why they should give up their poor endeavours, but rather a strong, and even alarming motive for greater exertion. The way to be raised above these low, cold, and unprofitable frames, is to use diligently the means. Pray; and if that is not sufficient, to prayer add fasting. Persevere, faint not, for you shall assuredly succeed.

I cannot, indeed, promise any that they shall ever in this life arrive at such a state, as

not occasionally to feel this barrenness and deadness of spirit. But in proportion as a man becomes more spiritual, these occasional depressions, at the same time that they grieve and humble him, will minister to his sanctification. They will teach him to cease from self-dependence, and to live more simply by faith; to long for that better state and place, where there shall be no more variation of frames, no more interruption of joy; where the vision of God shall be perpetual, and without a veil; and the faces of his saints beholding it, shine with a brighter glory than that of Moses, and shine thus for ever.

SERMON XIII.

ROMANS, viii. 13.

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

WE have here two opposite courses of life set before us, issuing in two opposite ends: living after the flesh; and, mortifying the deeds of the body through the Spirit. The first of these leads to death; the second, to life. Now, when the subject is thus stated, what ought you to desire the explanation of it to be? Surely the very truth! Surely you should wish every thing to be represented to you now, exactly as it will be found in reality hereafter; that you may not think you are walking in the way to life, when you are in

fact treading the path of destruction; nor, on the other hand, be tormented with the fear of perishing, when you are really advancing in the road to life. And what ought I to aim at; but to discharge my duty with all fidelity and plainness of speech, endeavouring to find out and declare what is indeed the will of God?

Before I enter more directly on the subject, let me observe, that every action of a man's life which is capable of being pronounced good or bad, is an act either of compliance with the flesh, or of obedience to the Spirit. And every man in the general course of his conduct, either fulfils the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; or else obeys the godly motions of God's good Spirit. But this important distinction is vastly more discernible in some actions than in others. In some cases, the *works of the flesh* are manifest; in others, the *fruits of the Spirit* are equally evident; while a great many are of a neutral character, appear indifferent, may belong either to nature or grace, and are done both by bad and by good men. The manifest works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunken-

ness, revellings, and such like. If men live according to these, no doubt they shall die; for they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The evident fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. And it is certain, that all who are thus minded, and who thus walk, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts; are Christ's, and partakers of life in him.

But there are many actions of a man's life, which cannot be easily classed under either the one or the other of the above descriptions; that is, *we* cannot class them, because we cannot see the motive from which they are done. Yet even these, indifferent though they seem, are not so; for they are either done with a view to the glory of God, and in obedience to his will, or they are not; and are, therefore, either works of the flesh, or fruits of the Spirit. This being the case, I need not treat separately and apart the two clauses, "living after the flesh," and "mortifying the deeds of the body;" for whoever does not the one, does the other. Mortifying the deeds of the body is nothing else than not living after the flesh; and living after the flesh is nothing else than neglecting to mortify the deeds of the body. It will be enough, therefore, to

shew what is meant by mortifying the deeds of the body; in doing which, let me call your attention to the three following propositions.

I. There is in every man a body of sin which needs to be mortified.

II. The agent by whose operation it must be done, is the Holy Ghost.

III. This work is accomplished in believers in the use of means.

I. There is in every man a body of sin which needs to be mortified. It is a corrupt principle; a departure from original righteousness, called in Scripture, the flesh, the old man, the body of sin. This is to begin with the sole and only principle; nature, since the fall, knows no other; and as long as the case is thus with a man, he is said in scriptural language, to be in the flesh. He lives after the flesh; he walks in the flesh; there dwells in him no good thing; he is incapable of any truly holy action, and cannot please God. In this state, therefore, even seemingly good actions are not really so; nay, according to the sound words of the thirteenth article of our church, "for as much as they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done; we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

But this body of sin has not a uniform

vigour in all its actings; nor have all its members equal life and force. There exist in all men prevailing propensities; some stronger than others. These form besetting sins, and are a very material object to be attended to in the work of mortification.

Further, even in the regenerate this principle of sin remains; so that when they would do good, evil is present with them: and particularly besetting sins will molest a man all his days; and furnish him with ground for the most guarded vigilance, and the most serious conflict.

We see, then, what is the work of religion; it is to mortify the whole body of sin, with a peculiar attention to the constitutional propensity. But if there dwells in man, by nature, no good thing, he will in vain seek in himself that which must mortify this evil principle. There must be some other principle, some higher agent. And,

II. The agent, by whose operation this work is to be done, is the Holy Ghost. It is from him that all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed. He is the author of spiritual life in regeneration; and in progressive sanctification, he carries on and perfects his own work. Hence, in the text, St. Paul says; "if ye, *through*

the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body." There is no mortifying the deeds of the body, except through the Spirit; those who have not the Spirit are called sensual. It is the Spirit who enlightens the understanding with the knowledge of divine truth. He convinces men of sin; shews the evil and danger of it; discovers the glory, grace, and loving-kindness of God; brings, in short, the words of Scripture home to the heart; and suggests those godly motions, in compliance with which the work of mortification consists.

III. But though this is the work of the Spirit, it is wrought by him in the use of means on the part of the believer. And in illustrating this third proposition, I must shew what these means are.

One of them, and a most necessary one, is *prayer*. If nothing can be done without the Spirit of God, the Spirit must be sought for by prayer. All blessings are to be obtained by prayer, but the Holy Ghost is by our Lord himself, particularly specified. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." If, then, you would succeed in this great and necessary work of mortifying the deeds of the body, seek the gift of the

Holy Ghost; for it is through him, and through him alone, that you can succeed.

To prayer, must be added meditation on the law, and on the gospel. By the law is the knowledge of sin. He who is ignorant of the law, is not aware of the many evils which dwell in his heart, and produce their bitter fruit in his life and conversation. How, then, can such a man be earnestly engaged in mortifying them, when he does not even find them out? whoever would mortify sin, must diligently study the law of God as a spiritual commandment which extends to the inmost thoughts, and compare therewith his own heart. And when by the law he has discovered the wickedness of his heart, and found out the sins which need to be mortified; he must, moreover, study the gospel, that he may be enabled effectually to mortify them. For the law is but a killing letter; it discovers sin, but does not afford the means of destroying it. The gospel alone teaches those truths, which are mighty through the Spirit to wean the heart from the love of sin.

As an additional mean of mortifying sin must be mentioned, fasting. This is a most valuable help, provided it be not used superstitiously as an end to be rested in: as if by

fasting a good work were performed, whereby a man might merit something at the hand of God. Setting aside this superstitious use of it; when used with understanding, to humble and afflict the soul for sin; to tame the flesh, and overcome the unruly will; it is of great efficacy to subdue our flesh to the Spirit, and to produce a humble, teachable, yielding frame of mind, which readily and without murmuring, obeys the godly motions of the Holy Ghost. This end of fasting is proposed, and most beatifully expressed in the Collect for the first Sunday in Lent. "Give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness." Not to torment our bodies for the sake of tormenting them; nor to measure the holiness of the act by the quantity of self-inflicted suffering; but to deny the appetite, in order to bring under the body, and to keep it in subjection; and to render the will in all things submissive to the will of God. When this is done, fasting has answered the required end; and the effect will be the sweetest and most delightful peace of mind, which never fails to follow when the will of the creature bends itself to that of the Creator.

In our rebellion lies our misery. We are miserable, because we are in arms against God. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither can be. But when this enmity is destroyed; when these arms are thrown down; when the man no longer opposes the law of God; but first submits to it, and then delights in it as holy, just, and good; the grand cause of misery is taken away, and a heavenly peace and holy joy overspread the soul. Happy is that self-denial which is attended with such fruits! And with rich advantage does the heart withdraw itself from carnal delights, that it may be filled and satisfied with heavenly consolations!

Having thus shewn what is the great work of religion, viz. to mortify the deeds of the body; by whose operation this work is to be accomplished; and the means necessary to be used on our part; I now would offer a few words of exhortation on the subject; partly to shew how the necessary means must be used; and partly to urge the use of them from the important considerations suggested in the text.

It is quite necessary to say, use the means with *faithfulness*; for there is a great disinclination to deny ourselves, and a backward-

ness to spiritual duties, in all our hearts. We are apt to make slight and superficial work of prayer. The Scriptures are neglected, or read in a careless manner. And when the duty of fasting is brought before a man; and the Spirit, as it were, suggests to him that he should fast and pray; he has many a plea against it. And often, to his great disadvantage, lays it aside, or puts off the duty to another time; when there was no sufficient reason why he should not have attended to it, and attended to it at that very moment.

I say, to his great disadvantage; for no duty, none of the means of grace, can be neglected by us, but to our own loss. By omitting to fast, when, if we were faithful in our deliberations, there is no good and sufficient reason why we should decline fasting; we greatly injure ourselves. We may gain, indeed, in point of present ease, and indulgence of sloth and appetite; but how much do we lose! that habitual self-command, that easy (I might almost say *natural*) temperance and government of the body which he possesses, who occasionally subdues it, and preserves his mastery over it, by fasting; together with that inward peace and comfort with which it pleases God to recompense the faithful and obedient use of his own appointed means.

Nor is it in the *use* of means only that faithfulness must be used, but also in the *end proposed.* That end must be the mortification of sin, of all sin; not sparing our most convenient transgression, our favourite indulgence. Else, if a sort of commutation could be allowed; if, in consideration of a man's fasting, he might be permitted to retain his vices; if fasting might be set in the opposite scale, to weigh against the continued practice of fraud, or falsehood, or covetousness, or drunkenness, or debauchery; such penances would be very common. Men would be very willing to purchase, at this rate, the liberty of sinning without remorse. And whereas it is a very hard thing to fast upon pure and right principles, upon these false ones it would be very easy. Love of sin itself would furnish a motive. There would be no need of any grace at all to fast on such grounds as these; but when the inducements to the performance of a self-denying duty are all to be drawn from gracious principles, those principles had need be very strong.

These considerations lead me to mention another qualification, with which the means of grace ought to be used, and that is wisdom. If your self-denial is not directed to a right end; if you do not aim at a right

object, it is all to no purpose, it is labour in vain. A man who fights with a shadow, or who beats the air, may use great exertion, and may be completely fatigued and exhausted; but he has gained no victory, he has vanquished no enemy. So you, if you have merely fasted, and rest in that outward performance, are where you were. *Remember the important end;* that your flesh may be subdued to the Spirit. See then, where, and in what respects, this subjection is most required; what members of the body of sin are most rebellious, and most hinder the will of God, and the good pleasure of his goodness, from being accomplished in you. Against these, address your fervent prayers; against these, exert your zealous endeavours; spare them not, but bring forth these enemies of your Lord, and slay them before him; though they be dear as a right-eye, pluck them out; though useful as a right-hand, cut them off.

Another part of wisdom in these duties is, to beware of extremes. We are apt to run into extremes; and when Satan sees you determined to mortify the deeds of the body; and that for this purpose you give yourself to fasting and prayer; he will endeavour to push you to extremes: to fast, it may be, so as

to injure your health; that, by the discouragement of this bad effect, you may in future give up the practice altogether. You must not, my dear brethren, be ignorant of his devices. Use faithfully the means, but look beyond them to the end; and use them so, and only so, as to be subservient to that end, which is the destruction of the body of sin, and the subduing of your flesh to a meek and willing conformity to the law of God.

Finally, let me urge all that has been said upon you by the plain, but powerful considerations suggested in the text. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." It is not a matter of choice, whether you will mortify the deeds of the body or not; you must do it, or perish. Suppose the indulgence of the flesh brought no present misery along with it; if ungoverned passions, and unbridled lusts, were attended with no present pain; if worldly and sensual affections occasioned no cares or disquietudes; still the wrath of God upon them, and threatening to visit them with everlasting destruction, is a most imperious reason why they should be forsaken. Be it so, that it is painful to mortify sin, and to crucify the flesh; yet will it not be more painful to feel the worm which never dieth, and the fire which is never quenched? Is it not bet-

ter to enter into life, halt or maimed; than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into hell fire?

Again, if it were not true, that godliness has the promise of the life that now is; if there were no peace attending a well-regulated mind, and purified affections; if love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, were not delightful in their own nature; still they would be most worthy of pursuit, when it is known that they end in everlasting life. What, though you may for a time have to toil up hill, and tread a steep and rugged path; though you may have some difficult duties to perform, and some painful sacrifices to make; yet heaven will be a rich compensation for all. When you arrive at that blessed place, you will not think that you had used too great or too self-denying exertions, in working out your salvation. Arm yourselves, then, with a noble and generous courage. Rise, and pursue the heavenly crown, the prize of your high calling; be not faint-hearted, shrink not from self-denial and conflict, for the Lord your God is with you; he will make you conquerors, and more than conquerors; and, if you be faithful unto death, will give you the crown of life.

SERMON XIV.

MATTHEW, vi. 7—15.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven; Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

SERMON XIV.

OUR Lord having cautioned his disciples not to pray like hypocrites, proceeds to instruct them not to pray like the heathen. Having guarded them against ostentation, he further guards them against delusion; and teaches them to offer both a sincere and a reasonable service.

Ignorance of the true character of God, among many other errors which it produces, leads generally to this: that men imagine long prayers and much speaking will prevail for their acceptance. Hence, the babbling of Baal's priests, from morning even until evening, "O, Baal hear us." Hence, too, the devotions which are counted by beads, scrupulously numbered and dealt out to the Almighty by measure.

So blind is the heart of man, so dull in divine things is his understanding, that he does not see that a service which is faulty and mistaken in its nature, can by no repetitions become good: and that if each single prayer is unacceptable and displeasing to God, a multitude of them will not render them acceptable and pleasing. The first thing to be considered is, do we pray aright? Do we pray at all? Of all the multitude of words which we utter,

do we breathe forth one humble, sincere, fervent, believing petition, to the throne of grace? One sigh or groan from a broken and contrite heart; one smiting on the breast; one heart-felt expression, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" or, "Lord help mine unbelief;" is worth infinitely more than the most punctual vespers of a formal monk, or the longest babblings of a notional church-man.

My brethren, God's eye is on the heart. He does not notice how long our lips are in motion; but how earnestly our hearts are engaged. And it is not either a multitude or fewness of words, but the spirit of devotion, which makes our worship a reasonable service. Our prayers may be very short, and yet be babblings; they may be very long, and yet be powerful and effectual pleadings with God. They may be with the use of a form, and yet not be formal. They may be extemporaneous, yet altogether in formality. In short, it is not what mode of prayer we use, or how long a time we pray; but whether we pray sincerely, not as the hypocrites; and wisely, not as the heathen: asking such things as are according to the will of God, and with such views of his character as are agreeable to the revelation which he has given of himself in his word.

In the first place, then, the subject requires that I should say: he reveals himself as the Father of his people. Within the compass of the first eighteen verses of this chapter, God is ten times called by that name; which teaches us, that if we would pray to God aright, we must learn to look upon him as a Father. I do not say that no prayer is heard but such as is accompanied by the spirit of adoption; though there may be something of a childlike disposition, some little undiscernible portion of the spirit of adoption, even in the first return of a sinner to God. But this I say, that no prayer is what it ought to be, except when in the power of a divine faith we claim God as our Father in Christ Jesus; and drawing near to him as such, spread our wants before him with filial confidence. If we look at the specimens of prayer recorded in the New Testament, we shall find in them the most beautiful union of humble reverence and holy boldness. Would we pray in like manner, thus humbly, thus confidently; we must acquire that distinct faith in Jesus Christ, by which we may both *be* and *know that we are* the children of God.

Further, our understandings must be rightly informed, and our hearts rightly affected, with respect to the intent of prayer. No enlight-

ened worshipper prays, in order that he may inform God of his wants; he is aware that his heavenly Father knoweth what things are needful for him, before he asks. If he enlarges his petitions, and makes known his requests fully and particularly; it is not that he may inform God of his necessities, but to plead with him for those blessings for which he has said that he will be enquired of. A criminal begs mercy of his prince, not to inform his prince that he needs a pardon; but that his intreaties may prevail on him to bestow it. How much more is the all-seeing God acquainted with the wants of his people! And how able and willing is he to supply them! Laying aside therefore, my brethren, all formality, and hypocrisy, and vain babbling, and unworthy conceptions of God; after this manner pray ye:—

"Our Father which art in heaven." Never lose sight of these two things in addressing your petitions to God—that he is your Father; and, that he is in heaven. Why should you not call God, Father? I believe every answer that can be given to this question will ultimately resolve itself into unbelief. For though you may plead past unworthiness, and present infirmity; yet what is the tenour of the covenant? is it not, "I will be their God,

and they shall be my people? And again, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty. Now if you lay hold on this covenant, you may call God your Father. And if you are hindered from laying hold of it by love of the world, and unwillingness to part with your sins, you are also hindered from praying; you do not pray at all. You are either utterly careless, or formalists; of course you cannot call God your Father. But whence is this carelessness, this formality? Is it not from unbelief? Leaving, however, the case of those who do not pray at all; no praying soul can be hindered from calling God Father, by any thing else but unbelief. Believe only the covenant, and you must believe that God is your Father; and when you do believe this, what holy confidence will it inspire! what boldness in approaching the throne of grace! Rest not, my brethren, till you can cry, Abba, Father; and when you draw near to the throne of grace, say, "our Father." *Our*, in the plural number, is used rather than *my*, in the singular; which may shew, that the union of Christians among each other, their being brethren in Christ, and having all one Father, should be fully kept in view. The attribute, "which art in hea-

ven" is added, that remembering the universal dominion, and infinite power of God, we may not be straitened in our expectations; but be fully persuaded, that what he has promised, he is able also to perform; and that he can do for us exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.

When we come before this great and glorious God, what shall we consider first; our own wants, or his greatness? Whether is it more seemly to begin with asking blessings of him, or with ascribing glory to him? As he is the first and the last, the beginning and the end in the universe; so let him be in our devotions; and let us reverently say, "Hallowed be thy name." The name of God means his character and glorious perfections; and when we pray that his name may be hallowed, we mean to express our unfeigned sense of his holiness, and our desire that all may see and acknowledge it. We consent to the righteous injunctions by which he has guarded the reverence due to his name. We declare our detestation of all profaneness, light oaths, and inconsistent profession of the true religion; and pray that he would teach us and others to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and that we, and all who name the name of Christ, may depart from iniquity.

For then is the name of God hallowed, when his holiness is rendered conspicuous and universally allowed; when every thing which bears any relation to him is confessed to be holy; and when nothing professes a relation to him but what is so. Profaneness and false profession proceed from the forgetfulness, that God and his religion are holy. From both these may the Lord deliver us, and teach us so to hallow his name, that he may be sanctified in our drawing near to him!

We next pray, "that his kingdom may come." In one sense his kingdom is already universal, for all things serve him; and even those who are unwilling to yield obedience to his laws, are over-ruled in their proceedings to fulfil his purpose. But we wish to see his kingdom come in a more glorious sense; in a sense to which the writings of the prophets direct us to look forward with hope. The universal reign of righteousness, when all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord; and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Or, if this glorious and expected coming of Christ's kingdom is not to take place in our time; if the appointed days and years are not fulfilled; we pray that his kingdom may come in a sense, in which all

may, and all that shall be saved, must know it. That his kingdom of grace, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, may be established in each of our hearts. That he may make us a willing people in the day of his power, and that he may reign in our breasts the Lord of every motion: so that every high thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God may be cast down, and every thought brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. Above all, we pray for the commencement of his kingdom in glory; for that blessed time and place, when all the nations of the redeemed shall stand around his throne, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands, and reign with him for evermore.

3. We pray that his will may be done in earth, as it is in heaven. The will of God is the wisest and the best; and then is the creature most holy and happy, when in every thing he cheerfully accepts, and readily executes, the will of the Creator. We pray that all may so respect the will of God; and that earth may thus resemble heaven. Thy will, O Lord, is holy and right. O, that all may obey it on earth, as it is obeyed in heaven! Whatever thou commandest, may we do it, without murmurings or disputings! O, let us no more

quarrel with the declaration of thy will, thy righteous and perfect law; but seeing that it is holy, just, and good, may we delight in it, and obey it from the heart. O, put thy laws in our inward parts, and write them in our hearts, and cause us to walk in thy statutes, and to keep thy judgments, and do them. And whatever thou appointest for us, teach us to accept thy perfect will with submission and thankfulness; knowing that all thy ways are mercy and truth to such as keep thy covenant, and thy testimonies. If thou givest us the good things of this life, we will bless thy name; and if thou takest them away, we will bless thy name. Whatever thou appointest, we would say: it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Or in the language of thy well-beloved Son, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt!"

Having thus prayed for the glory of God's name, the extending of his kingdom, and the accomplishment of his will; we proceed to spread our wants before our heavenly Father. "Give us this day our daily bread." Of whom should children ask bread, but of their father? Earthly parents may, indeed, be unable to supply the wants of their offspring; but neither the treasures nor the bounty of our heavenly Father can ever be exhausted. And in making this petition

to him, we express acknowledgment for the past, expectation of present supply, and dependence for the future. We acknowledge, that he it is that visiteth the earth, and blesseth it, and maketh it very plenteous; that maketh it soft with the drops of rain, and blesseth the increase of it.—' Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. Thou art the God who hast fed us all our lives long. And on thee we daily depend with cheerful confidence, and cast our cares upon thee, knowing that thou carest for us. To thee we still look for a supply of needful and convenient food, and for a blessing on our daily labours. O, prosper thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, prosper thou our handy work. Thus, looking up to thee, we leave ourselves and our concerns in thy hands; assuredly trusting, that whatever is needful and profitable for us, thou wilt supply.'

Again, we urge our request for forgiveness. " Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." We are all debtors to the divine justice; in many things we offend all; and if God should call us to the account of strict justice, the holiest actions of our lives would need forgiveness. Without this forgiveness, we are undone for evermore. Alas! what good will our daily bread do us, if we

are living under the wrath of God? What enjoyment can we have of any earthly comforts, while God is our enemy, and we are in danger of everlasting vengeance? The pardon of our sins is the first step to reasonable joy. The laughter of the man who lives at uncertainties, whether heaven or hell is to be his portion, is but a kind of frenzy. There is forgiveness with God: to testify of this forgiveness, to shew in what way God is glorified in exercising it, and to teach how it is to be sought, applied, and maintained, is the grand subject of the Bible. We make no use of the Bible at all; all the institutions of the ceremonial law, the testimonies of the prophets, and the instructions of the evangelists and apostles, are lost upon us, unless we learn how to obtain pardon of our sins.

In order to this, we must plead earnestly with God in prayer. We must pray for faith in the blood of Jesus, which can alone purge our consciences from the guilt of sin. Nor must we ever conclude that we have obtained mercy, as long as we harbour dispositions which the Bible assures us are inconsistent with a state of acceptance. One particularly our Lord instances, which is an unforgiving Spirit in ourselves. Where this dwells, there is no forgiveness from God; and therefore

our Lord teaches us to pray, "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." And at the end of his prayer, he takes up this matter afresh, and assures us, that our success in pleading for forgiveness ourselves, will be exactly according to the dealings which our offending brethren meet with from us. If we forgive, so will God; if we do not forgive, no more will God.

Art thou pleading for mercy at the throne of grace? And dost thou from thy heart forgive thy brother who has offended against thee? And dost thou doubt whether God will pardon thy offences? Be ashamed of thy unbelief. Thinkest thou that God, who is love, who delighteth in mercy, and who has given his own Son to die for enemies and rebels, will be out-done by thee in shewing mercy and pity? Thou forgivest the repeated offences of thy fellow-creature. What, then, though thy offences against God be infinitely greater and more numerous; yet remember, that the mercy of God exceeds thine in a still higher and nobler proportion. As the heavens are higher than the earth; so are his ways higher than thy ways, and his thoughts than thy thoughts. Believe only in the greatness of that mercy, and thy sins will not terrify thee.

Or art thou pleading for forgiveness, and retainest enmity against thy brother, and wilt not forgive his offences against thee? Weigh, in one balance, thy debt to God; in another, thy brother's to thee; and then say, if God forgives thee all that debt, because thou askest him, is it a great thing if thou forgive the trifling offence of thy brother? But deceive not thyself with vain hopes. If God see thee so implacable, and unsubdued by so much mercy; his anger will be kindled, and he will deliver thee over to the tormentors, till thou pay the uttermost farthing.

One more petition remains: "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Having our wants supplied, and our sins forgiven; it remains only that we walk so as to keep our garments clean, and contract not fresh defilement. That this is the great exercise and business of a pardoned believer, the whole Scripture testifies. "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go and sin no more." "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." These things being so, the question is how, during his sojourning on earth, beset with dangerous enemies within and

without, the world, the flesh, and the devil; the believer is to walk so as not to be entangled again in his former snares. The answer is, he must wait upon the Lord. He must as entirely depend on the grace and strength of Christ for his sanctification, as he does on the blood and righteousness of Christ for his justification. Justified by faith, and living a life of faith on the Son of God, he will be able to do all things through Christ's strengthening him. If he forgets this mysterious method, and trusts in his own strength, he is overcome. But when he lives in the sense of his entire insufficiency, the strength of Christ is made perfect in his weakness; and he finds it marvellously true, that when he is weak, then he is strong. Let it ever be remembered, therefore, that the distinction between a truly religious and a deluded Spirit, is the distinction between a rash, self-confident, and venturous temper; and the spirit of caution, holy fear, and self-distrust, which inclines a man to walk warily, to avoid temptation, to pray to be kept from it, or preserved through it and delivered from evil.

And to whom should we address these petitions, but to him whose name alone deserves to be glorified? The sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre; whose will

is altogether wise and holy, and who alone has power to supply our wants, to forgive our sins, to keep us from falling, and to present us before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. For his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

SERMON XV.

MARK, v. 28.

If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

IN the words just read did a poor suffering woman express the confidence which she felt of obtaining relief by applying to Jesus Christ. For twelve years she had laboured under an issue of blood; she had suffered much from the methods which had been used by physicians for her recovery; had spent all her substance; and was no better, but worse. In this sore calamity she heard of Jesus, came behind him in the press, and touched his garment; using the words read for the text, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." The

event answered her expectation: she was healed immediately. But Jesus, knowing that virtue had gone out of him, enquired who touched him. His disciples, surprised at the question, reminded him that the multitude was thronging and pressing about him on every side. But as Jesus persisted in his enquiry, the woman, finding she could not be hid, confessed the whole truth. Upon which, in the most encouraging and affectionate manner, Jesus commended her faith, and bid her go in peace, and be whole of her plague.

As all the miracles performed by our Lord were proofs of his divine power; so some of them are highly instructive in another point of view. They furnish us with exemplary instances of faith, and of remarkable benefits bestowed in answer to faith; so that those who at that time believed in Christ for the healing of their bodies, may be considered as patterns for all who, in every age, shall believe in him unto life eternal.

It is in this point of view that I design to consider the example of faith afforded in the conduct of the poor afflicted woman, whose instructive story is recorded in the passage before us. In this narrative, three things offer themselves to our consideration.

I. The strength of her faith.

II. The imperfections under which it laboured.

III. The success of a faith thus strong, though not faultless.

I. The strength of her faith we may estimate from the greatness of the benefit which she expected under discouraging circumstances. For twelve long years she had laboured under her distressing malady. The ablest physicians had been consulted, and the most painful remedies applied, in vain. She had suffered much, and spent all; yet her disease, instead of yielding to the means of cure, had grown more inveterate and violent. Expectation, often raised and often disappointed, brings on despair. Well might the poor woman have said within herself: "there is now nothing for me to hope for, but death; my sickness, which baffles the power of medicine, will work at last its own release." But instead of this, or even instead of applying to Christ as a kind of forlorn hope, for which she could be *no worse*, though she hardly *expected* to be *better*; she goes to him with the full persuasion, the assurance that she should obtain, not only mitigation of her pain, but perfect soundness: and this faith of hers will appear the more extraordinary, if we consider from how seemingly mean and in-

adequate a cause, she expected so great an effect. "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." She did not expect that he should lay his hands upon her, and stand and call upon the name of his God, and recover her from her infirmity. But she expected the whole from a touch; a touch, not of his person, but of his garment only; and that touch a stolen one, stolen too under several formidable disadvantages. It was a thing not commanded; neither was there any promise that it should succeed. Christ had no where nor ever said, that his garments should be the vehicles of healing virtue. She had neither the command, nor the promise, nor the declaration of Christ, to encourage her; it was only the strong persuasion which she entertained of healing virtue residing in him; and which, like the oil on Aaron's head, descended even to the skirts of his clothing.

But that she was not bidden, was the least part of her discouragement. She had some reason to think, and seems to have thought, that she was forbidden. Her plague was not only *painful*, but *polluting*. It rendered her, in the eye of the law, unclean; as such, her touch was defiling. She might, therefore apprehend that the multitude would not suffer her to draw near; nor the Saviour him-

self allow her to approach him; hence she came behind him secretly; and when questioned, trembled at the discovery of what she had done, while she confessed the truth. Such were the discouragements which the faith of this poor woman had to encounter. How strong was that principle which triumphed over so many obstacles!

II. Yet, strong and admirable as this faith was, it was attended with some imperfections, which it will not be unprofitable to notice. She seems to have had too low ideas of the love and knowledge of Jesus. She appears to have apprehended, that if she had directly applied to him, he would not have helped her; and to have imagined, that by applying to him clandestinely, she might have obtained relief without his knowing it. O, wonderful inconsistency! Strange mixture of faith and unbelief, of strength and weakness! How could she believe the virtue that dwelt in him so abundant; yet suppose the love scanty, the knowledge confined! How reasonable would it have been to conclude, that in whom there abode such healing power, there must be also knowledge, which no concealment could escape; and love, which no impediments could hinder from blessing! What

weakness, to expect so great a benefit *against his will, without his knowledge!*

III. Where faith, however, is real, God overlooks much infirmity; and, in the present instance, it was crowned with success. It seems to be the method of the Almighty, in answering the faith of his people, to do more than what he has bound himself to by promise. We read of some who brought their sick, and laid them in the way in which Peter was to pass, that his shadow, while he was passing by, might overshadow some. Of others, who from the body of Paul, carried to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, that the mere cloths which had touched *him* might convey healing to *them*. And of one who sought a cure for herself, by touching the garment of Christ. In these instances, faith hoped, not only *against hope*, but *without promise;* yet we hear not of one that failed; we do hear of most, that they succeeded. On the bringing of those handkerchiefs and aprons from the body of Paul, the diseases departed, and the evil spirits fled. And no sooner did this infirm woman touch the clothes of Christ, than all her expectation was realized, and her desire accomplished. She was made whole. The fountain of blood was dried up, and she felt

in her body, that she was healed of her plague.

Thus much for this interesting case, which will afford materials for important instruction in the application of the subject to ourselves.

1. What honour doth God put upon faith! How distinguished was the woman from the crowd which was thronging round Christ! The disciples, who could discern only the bodily touch, were astonished that Christ, pressed by so great a multitude, should say, "somedody hath touched me." There still remains the same essential difference between a believing and an unbelieving approach to Christ. Among the multitude that tread his courts or surround his table, Christ can distinguish the touch of faith; and those who by faith touch him, will derive from him healing and saving virtue; while others, though they throng and press him, and to outward appearance touch him, go away as they came, their sins unforgiven, their infirmities unhealed.

May we not suppose something similar to that which is recorded in the text, still to take place in heaven. Christ, from his throne of glory, looking on an assembly of worshippers below, on this assembly for instance, may say to the saints and angels which minister to

him, 'of that company, some one has touched me; the voice of prayer assails my ears, and draws down a blessing from me; which, or who of them was it that touched me?' And may we not conceive those glorified servants of his to answer: 'Lord, are not all praying? Do not we see many knees bended? Do not we hear many voices join? How sayest thou, who was it that *prayed to* me, that *touched* me?' My brethren, though neither men nor angels know who pray in reality, and who only seem to pray; yet Jesus Christ well knows; andhappy is that man whose believing and effectual prayer makes the Saviour feel that virtue is gone out of him.

2. But how mixed with infirmity is the faith of the best believers! There are few whose views of Christ are not partial. If they see his love, they perhaps see not his power or wisdom; or they may see *these*, and not see *that*. Hence, while in some respects they honour him by their faith; in others, they dishonour him by their unbelief. The disciples feared when the winds and waves were high; and reasoned because they had brought no bread. And thus it is, times of trial and temptation, though they exercise and strengthen faith, yet serve also to discover unbelief. Men's fears and misgivings in such times, the

anxiety with which they view the difficulties or distresses in which they are involved; what are these, but so many doubts of the wisdom, power, and love of Christ. It is happy for us that we have to do with one who knows our infirmity, and can bear with us. At the same time we must remember, that partial views of Christ, when we see one attribute but not others, render our faith lame, and cause our religious services to be in many respects preposterous and absurd. Let us consider, that Christ knows both what we do, and what we want; that no thought is concealed from him; that he sees our follies, can punish our negligence, can extricate us out of our difficulties, can remove our fears, and fulfil our desires. Thus will our religion be uniform, consistent, honourable to Christ, profitable to ourselves.

Indeed, my brethren, if our faith be weak, we have little excuse when we consider

3. What great advantages we have for the exercise of faith. How great, how glorious is the object of our faith: Christ in heaven, seated at the right-hand of God; having received the fulness of the Spirit, having all power committed to him, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. From such a Saviour, what can we hope less than that virtue should come out of him and heal

us all? Could that wondrous faith of the poor woman, when Christ was a despised and suffering mortal on earth, behold in him such glorious power as should lead her to expect a healing virtue in every thing connected with him? And shall not we, now that he is in heaven, expect a saving efficacy from his word, from the ordinances of his worship, and especially from that blessed sacrament of which we are invited to partake? Could she say, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole;" and may not each of us profess, "If I can but feed on his body and blood, I shall live for ever?" She hoped without warrant; he had not invited her to come to him; neither had he said, that the touch of his garment would convey health and cure. She came unbidden, to make a venturous effort, by an unprescribed way, for an unpromised mercy. But to us Christ says, "This bread is my body, which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me; this cup is my blood, of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins do this, as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me." He has told us, that he gave himself for the life of the world; that his flesh is meat indeed; and his blood, drink indeed. Shall we not then assure ourselves, that if we eat his flesh and

drink his blood, we have everlasting life? If she ventured on an unbidden act, with the hazard of offending; shall not we cheerfully perform that which is commanded, and which we know it is sin to leave undone?

Think only if, when she was just forming the resolution to make her way through the crowd, and steal a touch of his garment; if, in the moment of deliberation and doubt, whether she should or should not venture on so bold a step, the Saviour had seen her; had made the crowd retire; had called her to him; bid her touch his hands, and assured her that in the same moment she should be healed; think, I say, with what joy, with what hope, with what thankfulness, she would have hasted into his presence, and eagerly seized the dear token of her Saviour's favour, of her own deliverance. Oh! then with what joy, with what desire, should we go into his presence, and take the symbols of his love, which he invites us to receive, which he promises to bless. How confidently should we assure ourselves, that if we do but obtain a real touch of Christ, we shall derive from him a healing virtue. What though we have been long sick, though the diseases of our souls seem inveterate, though no spiritual physicians have been found able to heal us; let us still go confidently, know-

ing that our disorder cannot be so severe or complicated, but he is able to remove it. There is no guilt so great, which he cannot pardon; no corruption so strong, which he cannot subdue.

It is true, the healing of a sin-sick soul is a great work; but if we touch the Saviour, it is done. All manner of spiritual diseases depart before his presence, and are driven away from the soul which derives virtue from him. Is sin, then, your burden, your grief? Do all groan under the common taint of corruption, while the besetting sins of different men are widely different, and cause to each his own particular distress? My dear brethren, when you draw nigh to that table, you should be fully persuaded that you go to be healed of those maladies which cause you so much bitterness of soul. Say, if I do but feed on Christ, I shall be whole; if I touch but his body, get but a taste of that heavenly food; iniquity shall have no more dominion, guilt shall not prevail in my conscience, nor sin reign in my mortal body. Yes; faith, though it be weak, but as a grain of mustard-seed, will do great things.

My dear brethren, as Jesus Christ is a real person, now actually in heaven in our nature, having received gifts for men; since in him

there is plenteous redemption; since he is able to save his people from all their sins; and further, since he has provided this heavenly feast, and ordained it to be a means whereby he himself may be actually and truly received by us in all his saving virtue; I most earnestly desire and pray, that you may all understand the value and the nature of this blessed ordinance; that none may contemptuously neglect it, nor attend in ignorance or formality, not discerning the Lord's body, and thus only press around him, without touching or deriving virtue from him.

The best general direction which I can give, is what has in effect been already said; that the person, glory, grace, and sufficiency of Christ must be realised: it will then appear, that actually to come into contact with him, is every thing. When an union between Christ and the soul is really formed, and he takes up his abode in the heart, his enemies must fly before him. Union with Christ, therefore, is, and must be, peace and victory, health and soundness of mind. And this union is formed by faith; every ordinance is unprofitable without faith. It is faith which sees Christ in his word, and discerns and receives him in the elements of bread and wine. But man is slow to believe. Unbelief is natural to all;

and the hinderances to faith in different men are so various, that it would be impossible, in addressing a congregation, to meet the exact case of each individual. The scruples, the fears, the doubts, which different persons may entertain; and the grounds of those fears and scruples, it is impossible for us so to foresee, as to provide in our public discourses a remedy for each. But why should not that be done which the exhortation of our church recommends; and which is, in itself, evidently so reasonable and proper? Why should not those who are distressed with fears and scruples, or who feel themselves ignorant, and wish for information; make use of their minister, lay open to him their grief, their doubt, their desire, and seek instruction from him respecting any point which they do not understand?

This seems to me so natural and becoming, that I sometimes wonder why it is so seldom practised. One would suppose, that the care of preventing any self-deception or error, would make most persons desirous of having the opinion of their spiritual guide respecting their meetness for the holy communion. My only object in saying these things, my dear brethren, is that when you approach his table, you may discern his body, and believe the suf-

ficiency of grace and strength which dwells in him. And as many as have found help from him, and experienced his saving power, and healing virtue; let them shew forth his praise. It was surely a fault in the woman who was healed; that, if Christ had not drawn from her a reluctant confession, she would have gone away with the stolen benefit, without giving God the glory. If we are healed of our leprosy, we have the benefit; let God have the praise.

Lastly, I would speak a word to the poor. The woman whose faith is commended, whose infirmity was healed, was a poor woman. She was an instance of the truth of that Scripture, "God hath chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." This is your consolation. In this life you do not receive it; be careful then to secure that better portion. The poor woman had spent all her money on her physicians; but if she could have had it twice told; nay, had she a thousand times as much, what would it have been to her in comparison of what she found from Christ. The poorest man that has Christ, is rich; the richest man that wants Christ, is poor. Happy is your poverty if it leads you to Christ, fatal those riches which draw men from him. A peaceful conscience and a pure heart, these things faith

draws down to you from Christ. What has wealth to shew which can be compared with these? But if you are poor and unbelieving, poor and Christless; then is your poverty deep indeed; having no portion in this life, and no good hope in the next, you are of all men the most miserable. Oh! rest not in so sad a case; follow the example of the infirm woman; she was your companion in poverty, be you her companion in faith. With the same confidence wherewith she touched the garment of Christ, do you approach his table; and you shall have a banquet which kings might envy, which shall not merely feed your bodies for a season; but which shall nourish your souls unto everlasting life.

SERMON XVI.

1 Corinthians, x. 17.

For we, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

THE passage which has been read sets before us the union subsisting between Christians, as it is exhibited in their partaking of the Lord's Supper. The sentiment expressed in the words is simple, but important: because believers are partakers of that one bread, they are thereby shewn to be themselves one bread and one body. It is under this single view that I propose, in the following discourse, to consider the ordinance to which we are this day invited. All other points connected with

the Lord's Supper may, for the present, be dismissed. I shall not dwell on the general nature of the ordinance, nor on the ends for which it was ordained, nor on the dispositions and preparation necessary to a due partaking of it, nor on the benefits thereby received. Of these particulars, so much only will be noticed as falls in with the point of instruction obtained from the text; which is, that the ordinance itself supposes a union on the part of those that receive it; and that this union must be understood and felt, if we would reap the full benefit of that ordinance by which it is illustrated.

When believers meet together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, their object is to shew forth the Lord's death till he come. They declare in each other's presence, that the body of Christ given for them, and his blood shed for their sins, are the only grounds of their hope; that they expect salvation from no other quarter. They mutually disclaim all dependance on any works of their own; and confess themselves to be without righteousness, and without strength, save only in the Lord. Yet, observe, they profess, and as it were call each other to witness, that they are not without hope. They declare that they look for salvation in Christ; and that they believe their

souls to be nourished unto eternal life by his body, which is meat indeed; and by his blood, which is drink indeed. In token of this, they eat that bread, and drink that cup; receiving the pledges of their common salvation, and rejoicing together in the hope of glory.

If those who thus communicate are real believers; and if they do all this with understanding and truth, discerning the Lord's body; then they are indeed made partakers of Christ. The bread, which we break, is to them the communion of the body of Christ; the cup, which we bless, the communion of his blood. All true Christians are united to Christ by faith. They are one with him. What they do in the Lord's Supper, with the aid of visible signs, they do by faith daily without any such aid. They live a life of faith on the Son of God. They receive out of his fulness, grace for grace. And this exercise of faith is called eating his flesh, and drinking his blood. Those who do so, derive life from him; for he is the bread of life, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. He himself says, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Thus, every true believer is united to Christ, and has a spiritual life by virtue of that union.

And as believers are one with Christ, they

are of course one with each other. But this union, as it is formed and continued by the secret and silent acts of faith, is not discernible to the world. Each believer is one with Christ, but is not declared to be so; and all are one with each other, but are not manifested so to be. In order to this, there must be a *public acknowledgment, a public act.* Every exercise of social religion may be considered in some measure as such a confession; but none is so expressive and significant as the Lord's Supper. There believers not only confess, but exhibit their mutual faith, and dependance on their common head. There they, being many, are shewn to be one bread and one body.

The union, we see, is represented by two terms: they are one bread, and they are one body. Both these metaphors convey to us the idea of oneness. In bread, what were once distinct and separate grains of corn, are blended together so as to become one lump. And in the body, the several members, though called by different names, and performing different functions, have one common life and feeling. The general truth illustrated by both similitudes, is the same; but each will afford a distinct practical instruction.

Believers, you feed on Christ: you all eat

of that spiritual meat; you all drink of that spiritual drink. Christ is the rock which follows you while you pass through the wilderness of the world; he the heavenly manna which nourishes your souls to eternal life. He is the bread of life, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Those who do not eat the flesh of the Son of man, have no life in them; but you who eat his flesh, and drink his blood, have everlasting life. And that life which you derive from him is a holy principle: it assimilates you to himself; makes you like him. Hence, if you have experienced the full virtues of that heavenly bread, you become not only one bread, but a new lump. You are not only united, but changed. Your union is not only the joining together of a number of parts, which, except for that combination, are the same that they were before, and form a mass of the same kind. Yours is a union of a higher and holier nature. It is at once a union, and a transformation. It makes you one with each other, and severally like unto Christ.

And this you are always to bear in mind; and in your use of the means of grace, in the ordinances of public worship, and in social meetings, to aim at this great point; to purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new

lump. The leaven of malice and wickedness, the leaven of deceit and guile, the leaven of pride, worldly lusts, and cares, must be put away; and, instead of them, peace, and love, and truth, humility, and heavenly-mindedness, must compose the holy mass which you now form. So that you not only may be one bread; but that bread pure, and free from distasteful and unwholesome mixtures.

Further, as the bread which you partake of is the communion of the body of Christ; so, you who partake of it, are not only one bread, but also one body. And from your union, as thus represented, arise duties of the highest order, and peculiarly marking your new Christian state in Christ. It was after treating of this union between himself and believers, as it is exhibited under the image of a vine and branches, (from which union flows the relation of believers to each other, as united in him;) that our Lord delivered his new and great commandment—"This is my commandment: that ye love one another as I have loved you." In no imaginable point of view can this great duty of loving one another, be seen more strongly, than when believers are considered as fellow-members of the same body. How beautifully, and how forcibly does the apostle Paul illustrate this idea!

"If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

Christians, ye are brethren; nay, ye are more than brethren; ye are one. As you are members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones; so every believer is to you, bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. Now, no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it with a steady and undissembled love. Thus natural be your affections towards each other, O ye who partake of the body of Christ. Let the unity which you have in him be manifested by the tenderest sympathies, and by the most sincere and unvarying kindness. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. With the weak, be you weak also; and burn with them that are offended. Let your love rise superior to little disgusts. A brother in Christ may have his faults; but if you have, on the whole, reason to think that he is in Christ, he is a brother still. Be far, then, from treating too harshly, a diseased member; and still farther from triumphing in that, which you ought to consider as a blemish in your own body. If you are strong, and your brother is weak; you that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please

yourselves. Reprove an offending brother, and try to correct his fault, as you would wish to heal a limb of your own body; but do not hate him, do not love him less.

And while you view all your brethren in Christ as members of the same body, let the love which you have for the whole, correct all narrow and selfish affections. Let there be nothing encroaching in your conduct towards them; nothing insincere, or overbearing, or unkind. The moment you view yourselves and them as separate and distinct, instead of regarding all as united in Christ, then wrong affections will begin to appear, pride, vain glory, self-preference. So it is, so it will be, among those who know not that sweet bond of union which you have in Christ; but so it must not be among you. With you must be no jealousies, no self-preference, no contempt of others. Those of you who are higher in station, or furnished with more excellent gifts, must not exalt yourselves above such as are lower or more humbly endowed. Nor must the brother of low degree repine at his lot, or envy those who are advanced above him. But each, in the place which he occupies, must labour to promote the welfare of the whole body, and to glorify him who is the common head of all.

Such are the duties flowing from that union of believers with each other, which is expressed by their being one bread, and one body; and which is exhibited in their partaking of the Lord's Supper. And if, my brethren, you draw nigh to the table, thus viewing yourselves as one with Christ, and with each other; I know not any thing on earth which can afford a nearer resemblance to heaven, than this spiritual feast.

But in order to the perfection of this joy, both the things above mentioned must be united. You must view *yourselves* in Christ, and *each other* in Christ; you must have a good evidence of your own interest in him; and a reasonable persuasion, that those who come with you to the table, are partakers of your faith and joy. If either of these two things be wanting; if you have either doubts of yourselves, or suspicions of others; such doubts or suspicions will hinder your rejoicing in this ordinance.

If you doubt of yourselves, doubt your own faith and interest in Christ; your joy must abate in proportion to your doubts. You ought to rejoice in the belief, that you are eating and drinking salvation; but if you fear that you are eating and drinking damnation, even

though your fear be groundless, it will hinder your joy, your love, your thankfulness; and, therefore, prevent your reaping the full benefit of the ordinance. And if you be really out of Christ, void of true faith, you have no business at that table. If you have no evidences of conversion; if, in your general temper and conduct, you are worldly, selfish, pleasure-loving; if you are living in malice or hatred; if you are censorious and uncharitable; if you attend the Lord's Supper as a customary thing; if you approach the table in a confidence of your own righteousness, or trusting to your week's preparation—you do in this case eat and drink condemnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body. You carry a hard, unhumbled, unbelieving heart to the table: nor do you even seek there to have that heart humbled, softened, renewed, sanctified. You seek not to have the love of sin mortified, nor to obtain a victory over the world by the faith of Jesus. But you go with your duties in your hand; and thus vainly imagine to make compensation for your sins, which you have not the heart fully to forsake. You do not, in this ordinance, feed on Christ; you are not one with him. The comfort of the ordinance you do not taste; the benefit you do not reap. You do not come to Christ

poor and needy, to be filled with good things; but are rich, and must be sent empty away.

And, as it is necessary that no one should come to the holy communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy through Christ, and with a quiet conscience; so, in order to the full joy, and benefit, and flow of love, which should result from it as a social act; it is necessary that there should be a confidence in the genuine faith of all who are together partakers of the ordinance. Suspicions, on this head, must chill and damp that warm and joyous love that ought to prevail.

It may be asked, indeed, what have we to do with others? and truly, every man's great concern is with himself. He must "examine himself; and so eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." He is not called upon thus narrowly to examine others. Where he knows nothing to the contrary, he may hope all is well. But when he does see and know persons living in such practices, as he is sure no faithful Christian would live in; can he behold such persons rushing to the table without concern? Can he consider himself as one bread and one body with such? It cannot be.

Nor let it be said, that we have no concern with other people; and that, if we are right

ourselves, we may rejoice in the feast, whether those who partake with us are right or not. For it is every man's concern, that the real intention of Christ's ordinance be kept up. It is a feast for believers; not for self-righteous, formal, or worldly persons. And if there be these spots in our feasts of charity, who feed themselves without fear; in proportion to the number of them, must be the lessening of our joy.

Ye who are formal and self-righteous, who never felt the burden of sin, nor fled for refuge to Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, come not to the table, lest ye eat and drink judgment to yourselves. And ye who are living in open sin, know that you hinder the rejoicing of others, who would wish to see around the table a company of humble and fruitful believers; and that your coming is not profitable to your own souls, but rather will bring upon you greater damnation.

But God forbid that I should say, come not, to all who cannot rejoice in the assurance of faith and hope. Come every one who, feeling his need and misery, is casting himself on Christ for mercy and grace. Let not the heart of such be discouraged. Hear the Saviour himself say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you

rest." Venture to trust him, he is meek and loving. He will deal with you gently. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Come, and be not faithless but believing; and you will find this ordinance to be both a means of receiving grace, and a pledge to assure you of it.

And you who come with knowledge and faith, with humility and thankfulness, loving the Lord, and discerning his body; draw near to the table, and rejoice in the feast. Neither let it too much offend you, if you see some whose faith and union with Christ you are tempted to suspect. Be cautious in judging; and, if you have opportunity to warn any, do so. After all, in this imperfect state, things will be imperfect. Tares will grow with the wheat; and a communion, consisting of saints only, is looked for in vain below.

Let this thought teach you to make another most important use of the ordinance to which you are called. Look upon it as a sort of anticipation of the heavenly feast above. There all will be perfect. You shall there need none of those helps which are now requisite to aid your feeble apprehensions. You shall not discern the body of Christ in emblems of bread and wine; but you shall see him face to face. You shall be like him; and all who sit down

with you at that table shall be like him also. No hypocrite, no formalist, shall enter there. None but saints, whose faith and obedience have been fully tried, and who have each received the honourable testimony, "well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Every heart shall be filled with the love of Christ; and amongst each other, all shall enjoy the most delightful and unmixed communion. No party names, no jarring interests, no jealousies, no differences of opinion; but all fully joined together in one heart and one mind, and Christ all in all to every one! O, my brethren, burn not your hearts to taste this bliss, to be admitted as guests at this table? Wait a little time, and all shall be realized. You shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God; there you shall be satisfied, there you shall have fulness of joy, and that joy eternal. That cup of blessing shall be always full; and that fruit of the vine, which you shall drink new in your Father's kingdom, shall for ever refresh and gladden your souls.

SERMON XVII.

1 Corinthians, vii. 35.

That ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

In treating the very important subject of my text, I shall not take into consideration the particular question with which the apostle connects it. It is evident, that what he says on the subject immediately before him, he might have said on a thousand others. Every thing which a Christian engages in, or has to do in the world, ought to be so conducted as not to interfere with the great duty of attending upon the Lord. And a very material branch it is of Christian wisdom, to know how to pass through the various events of life in such a manner as not to suffer them to lay hold on the mind, and distract its at-

tention from the one great object with which it should be occupied.

In order to illustrate these ideas, and the meaning of the text more fully, I would call your attention to the two following considerations.

I. To attend upon the Lord is the daily work which every man has to do.

II. The world and its concerns have a strong and manifold influence in distracting the attention from this duty.

Hence arises the necessity of considering,

III. The remedies which may be successfully applied against this evil.

I. To attend upon the Lord is the daily business of every Christian. Believers are a holy priesthood, whose constant office it is to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Men of the world, whose whole religion consists in a hasty form of prayer, uttered with little meaning, while God is forgotten through the course of the day; have no idea how important this work of waiting upon God is, in the eyes of a real Christian. Indeed the truth is, that in waiting upon God several qualifications are implied, of which worldly men are altogether destitute; and without which it is not possible to attend upon the Lord with steadiness and acceptance. There

must be some knowledge of him as a covenant God, reconciled to them in Christ Jesus; some persuasion, on good grounds, that he really accepts their works: for waiting upon God implies the actual exercise of faith, hope, love, joy, and all other spiritual and holy affections, which are expressed in the acts of prayer and praise. A form of words, where these affections are not felt, but the mind is diverted to other things, is nothing else than a continued distraction from beginning to end; or rather, it is no waiting upon God at all. A man does not arrive at that state in which he *can* attend upon the Lord, till in repentance and faith he lays hold on the promises of God in Christ Jesus. Before he thus believes, he is far off, and his duty is to seek God. When he does believe, he is brought near, and his delightful task is to attend upon the Lord. And to do this is considered by every thriving Christian, as the grand business of his life.

The actual exercise of divine communion in prayer and praise will occupy no inconsiderable part of his attention. Though he "waits upon God all the day long," yet he more immediately and directly waits upon him in these spiritual employments. All the true servants of God have been persons who spent much time in prayer, and delighted in the ordinan-

ces of God's worship. David, the man after God's own heart, discovers continually the delight which he had in the house and ordinances of God. Anna, the prophetess, is commended as one who departed not from the temple, serving the Lord with fastings and prayers, night and day.

Reading the word also, and meditating in his statutes, is a very material branch of waiting upon God. I need not mention how much holy men of old, and especially the Psalmist, were occupied in God's statutes; this must be known to every one who is at all acquainted with the contents of his Bible. But we do not apprehend the full meaning of the duty of waiting upon God, unless we consider the Christian as setting the Lord before him in the general course of his life, consulting the honour of God in every point of his conduct, and seeking to know his will in every step he takes; in short, whether he eats, or drinks, or whatsoever he does, doing all to the glory of God.

Do not think that I am wishing to set before you an imaginary picture of what never takes place in real life. I know too well how little there is of this spirit among us; and shall presently call your attention to the causes and the remedies of this lamentable defect. My

object, under the first head, has been to make the duty itself, of waiting upon God, clearly understood. And we see it consists in this: a true knowledge of God, and a child-like affection towards him; expressed, maintained, and increased by constant communion with him, and much meditation on his word; and carried into common life in a collected frame of mind, viewing all circumstances and all concerns as parts of one great business, viz. serving God; accounting every thing well done, when it is done according to his will, and so as to bring honour to his name; and every thing ill done, when his commandment has been forgotten, and when there has been no eye to his glory. Now, however true it may be, that the earnest and fervent spirit of waiting upon God is much decayed in the present age; yet it is what every real Christian sets before him, and aims at in practice, though he finds a variety of things which hinder him from preserving that steady and devoted spirit which he would wish to maintain.

II. What these are, it will be necessary, in the second place, briefly to consider.

There is no man, though we consider him merely as an individual unconnected with others, but is liable to feel in many points the influence of worldly concerns. The changes

of health or sickness; good or bad fortune; different prospects opening before him; opportunities of advantage, exciting desire, or if lost, occasioning regret; provocations from the perverseness, negligence, or want of punctuality in other persons, or serious injury from their dishonesty: something in short, at every turn, which has a tendency to draw away his mind from attending on God with undisturbed composure. But this is too advantageous a statement; no man can be considered merely as an individual. Every man has relations, parents, or brothers, or children; and each of these exposed to a number of vicissitudes in which he cannot be unconcerned. The sickness or death of any of them, concern about their success in life, and the care of making provision for them, their conduct to him or others, and many other particulars, may prove hinderances to spiritual duties. In short, there is no end of enumerating the instances of things which may distract a believer, in his waiting upon God; they are almost as many as the things or persons he has to do with. Scarcely a day passes which does not bring something to fasten on his mind. And little things, mere trifles, are often sufficient very greatly to disturb the soul, and render it in a measure incapable of holy exercises. It is easy

to see that very great hinderance in waiting upon God may thus arise from worldly things; and will arise, when there is not divine grace and spiritual wisdom. Hence, hopes are raised and fears alarmed; hence, often arise perplexity, hurry, and confusion of mind; hence, fretfulness and anxiety; hence also, in some cases, the conduct is warped, and too great a conformity to the spirit and temper of the world takes place.

III. It is now time to propose the remedies of this evil, which will be of different classes, according to the different characters of professing Christians, and the different kinds of distraction to which they are exposed.

One very important direction is so to arrange worldly business, as to avoid foreseen hinderances. Of so much importance did this precaution seem to St. Paul, that though he was as far from a superstitious or monastic spirit as any man that ever lived, and understood and asserted Christian liberty in every respect as clearly and as boldly as any; yet even he, in the then-existing state of the Corinthian church, recommended a single life, on the sole ground of its affording better opportunity for waiting on the Lord without distraction. Now, if this matter appeared of so much consequence in the Apostle's eyes, what

shall we say of those Christians, who, far from such a self-denying provision for attending upon the Lord, are at no pains at all to regulate their affairs with this view; but are solely led by the consideration of interest, ease, and pleasure. Nay, who multiply engagements, and heap business upon business, more than they can well attend to at all; and yet are not concerned that they leave no time for prayer and communion with God, and that by the variety of their worldly projects their minds are so occupied and distracted, that the little leisure they have, finds them very indifferently qualified to improve it to the good of their souls.

To men of this character, I would address a few words of admonition. Before you enlarge the number of your employments, consider whether there is any real need for so doing. Can you not support yourselves and families in a comfortable way at present? It is true, you have a right to avail yourselves of any favourable opportunity of bettering your circumstances; but the mere prospect of becoming rich, will by no means excuse your hastily plunging into a variety of worldly concerns to the hinderance of your duties, and to the danger of your souls—very great danger; for, if you thus run into temptation, you can

hardly expect the grace of God to deliver you from evil; nor will it be at all wonderful, if the spirit of the world in which you are swallowed up, in time take away all relish for every employment of a holy and spiritual nature. Brethren, beware; do not let Satan deceive you by saying, this is harmless, this is lawful. I am not supposing the case, that you practise unlawful methods of gain; though, if you venture to the utmost verge of what is lawful, there is no knowing to what lengths you may proceed. I suppose, however, the steps which you take, to be lawful; what then? Is every thing which is lawful, expedient also? Are you sure, that when you fill your hands so full of business, you shall still be able to maintain a praying spirit, to preserve the simplicity of faith in Christ, and dependance on God, and to thrive and grow in grace? If you cannot answer for this; if you cannot promise that you shall bring forth fruit to perfection, though you receive the seed of the word among thorns; surely you act neither a wise nor a Christian part, in standing upon the lawfulness of what you do. You should rather consider, whether you will not be miserable losers at last by those lawful engagements which deaden your souls, and render you indisposed for holy exercises.

If they make you unfit for heavenly employment now, they will make you unfit for heaven itself, when you die. And think what it will profit you, to gain the whole world, and lose your own souls.

The next direction which I would offer, by way of remedy against the evil under consideration, shall be addressed to those who not only have some knowledge of God, and profession of his truth; but who are also aware of the dangers arising from this very quarter, and are desirous to escape the snare; yet find their minds continually harassed in holy duties, by cares and perplexities concerning worldly things. Some whose hearts are thus exercised, may have, seemingly, very sufficient reason for it; being involved in very embarrassing difficulties, oppressed with poverty, or in situations otherwise very trying. Others may find much trouble from a number of trifling circumstances which, one after another, rise up, and seem for the moment to possess an importance more than belongs to them.

No doubt, there is a very material distinction between these two cases; yet I may say to both—resolve all these superfluous cares into unbelief. Truly, they are superfluous, and it is unbelief which makes them

prevail. Fortify, then, your minds, by perusing those passages of Scripture, which are particularly directed against such distracting imaginations. Hear Saint Paul bid you "be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Why should any thing distract your mind, and hinder your waiting upon God; when that very thing may be turned into matter of supplication, and become an occasion of waiting upon him? Hear Saint Peter direct: "casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Hear the Son of God himself reprove your want of faith: "Take no thought for your life what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Let these considerations sink deep into your minds; realize, more strongly, the relation in which you stand to God as a Father; see him engaged by covenant and by promise to make all things work together for good to them that love him; and endeavour thus to repose your minds, in quiet confidence, upon him. Fear not, for it is his good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Thus let those be stirred up to wait upon God more diligently,

who labour under heavy pressures; and those who are troubled about less matters would do well to reflect how many are quiet and thankful, whose lightest burden is heaviness compared with the heaviest of theirs. And all, laying aside every weight, and girding up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope constantly and patiently for the grace which shall be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

And this brings me to a third direction: contemplate much the nearness and vast importance of eternity, and see in this light, the vanity of all those things about which you are apt to be troubled, or by which you are distracted. How soon will they all be as if they had never been! Those busy moments are making provision, as they fly, for moments which must pass away in their turn. Those important concerns which look so big, and demand so close attention, how soon will they disappear for ever! While eternity, that great thought, with what demonstration does it shew all things here to be lighter than vanity! Our comforts, our possessions, our relations, our idols; whatever we think them now, what will they be in a few years? Or what will they appear to be, when the soul enters on her eternal portion? My brethren, the

time is short; it remaineth, therefore, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. If, then, you would wait upon God to good purpose, be serious as men that have here no continuing city, but who seek one to come. Have your loins girded about, and your lights burning, and be yourselves like men that wait for their Lord. Without this serious spirit, there is no such thing as attending upon the Lord. A light and trifling mind is always distracted, always dissipated; is easily moved about by every change of circumstance. As straws or feathers are driven about by the wind, while heavier substances lie unmoved; so every wind of fortune affects those minds which are not kept steady and fixed to their centre by the weighty consideration of eternity. They may hear the word with joy, and often experience a considerable melting of affection; but things eternal not having a deep hold on their minds, when they are out of the sound of the gospel, they are ready to be carried away by every vanity.

I will conclude with a few words of further application, addressed to those who do not attend upon the Lord, and to professing Christians.

First, then, let me address you who are strangers to God. You have heard this day, what it is to wait upon God; and you must know, that it is very far from being the business of your lives to do so. Nay, when you have an hour to spare for this employment; like persons who are unused to any work, you know not what to do with it. When you are alone, as it were, with God, you cannot tell how to wait upon him; you can go through your form of devotion, or read a chapter in the Bible; but you have no real intercourse with him. He receives only the homage of your lips, not the offering of your hearts; nor do you know how to order your cause before him, to spread before him your wants, to fill your mouth with arguments, and plead with him, as with a Father, for mercy and grace. It is matter of surprise to you, what religious people can find to do in their closets, and why they delight so much in the ordinances of public worship. And do not you see, that if they have a real delight in these things, and you have not; the cause must be a radical difference between your character and theirs?

O, deceive not yourselves by thinking how good you are to neighbours and relations, and how blameless in your general deportment among men. The question is, do you attend upon the Lord? Is it the great business of your life to do so? If not, you are no servants of God. Surely, my brethren, your duty to God is the great thing; and if this is neglected, what signifies all that you can say of your unexceptionable behaviour to your fellow creatures? Oh! seek to know God, in order that you may serve him. Seek to know him as your God and Father in Christ Jesus; go to him in repentance and faith; thus shall you obtain remission of sins, and be able to walk with him as his children.

Lastly, to those who profess serious religion, I would say,

1. Do not neglect your worldly affairs; do not run here and there, and call this waiting upon the Lord, while the temporal concerns which you ought to attend to, are in disorder and confusion. I would have you be without carefulness; but this is quite a different thing from being without exertion. I would not have you be slothful. No; where a person is slothful in temporal things, depend upon it he will not be diligent in spiritual things. "Not slothful in business," is what the apostle

joins together with "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." That freedom from the distraction of earthly concerns, which a truly spiritual mind possesses, far from being the result of indolence or want of thought, springs from the vigorous exercise of the most active, and the noblest faculties of the soul. Mistake not, then, inconsideration and idleness for that freedom from earthly cares, which arises from a lively trust in God, and a sense of his favour; from a heavenly mind, a steady looking forward to eternity, and a deep conviction of the fleeting nature of every earthly good.

But when I say, do not neglect your worldly affairs; I would say also, do not suffer them to interfere with your waiting upon God. Remember you have a work to do which is above every other, and in which you may include every other. It is the one thing needful; and comprehends in it all needful things. Wait on the Lord; wait, I say, on the Lord. See, in the first place, that the present state of your soul be good. Seek an assurance of the pardon of your sins, and the certain testimony of your conscience, that your heart is right with God. Obtain the spirit of adoption crying, Abba, Father. Thus walk with God as children, and in waiting upon him, and in

fellowship with him, seek the increase of your faith, the strengthening of your hope, and the confirming of your love; and then I need not say, why and for what you should wait upon him; for the more you do so, the more you will see what you want, and what is to be found in God. You can never know enough of his glorious and lovely character, and of the person and offices of Jesus Christ. If, as soon as you obtain so much knowledge of the love of God in Christ, as sets your conscience at ease, you are then satisfied and want no more; it is a bad sign, and affords too much reason to suspect that the knowledge which you have already, is not genuine. For a real sight of God, as it is bliss, yea heaven itself, produces always a longing desire of further discoveries. "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," says Moses; and David, "to see thy power and glory; so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Endeavour to know more of the character of that God who is your strength and salvation, your guide and your portion; and then walk in the sense of his all-sufficiency, of his pardoning love, of his providential care, of his plenteous grace; and in a cheerful looking forward to the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Thus furnished with considerations so weighty, so

solid, so encouraging, so triumphant, you will pass through the world as one who has but little to do with it, and who is travelling under good guidance to his rest in glory—I will not say, not feeling the troubles of life; but certainly not sorrowing, "as others which have no hope"—I will not say, taking no pleasure in any earthly good; but certainly not resting in any, or making it an idol; but receiving the evils of the world with that meek submission; and rejoicing in its comforts, with that chastised and temperate joy, which becomes one who looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; and who remembers that the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, eternal.

SERMON XVIII.

COLOSSIANS, iv. 5.

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.

THE persons concerning whom the apostle Paul gives to the Colossian Christians the direction contained in the text, were doubtless such as had not received the Christian religion, even in name. It may, therefore, be a question worthy of consideration, how far this precept can with propriety be addressed to Christians who do not live amongst professed unbelievers. If, in Christian countries, those who profess Christianity have altogether another spirit from that which prevailed among the Pagan inhabitants of Rome or Athens, then the rule has ceased to be necessary; and

he who would conduct himself wisely toward them that are without, so as to receive no harm from them, but rather to do them good, must go to some foreign land, where the truth of the gospel has not been revealed, or has not been received. But if, among professing Christians, there are many whose character more resembles the heathens among whom the first Christians lived, than those Christians themselves; then all, who have in some degree drunk into the true spirit of Christianity, will have need of wisdom, that they may know how to behave themselves in the eyes of these persons. And whatever caution and circumspection might be needful to the primitive Christians in their intercourse with the heathen, will be needful for true Christians in our day, in their communications with the men of this world.

In order to ascertain what is the matter of fact in this case, we have but to enquire what true Christianity is, and compare it with the prevailing spirit of the Christian world.

The spirit of real Christians is a serious and mortified spirit. They live not for time, but for eternity. Their great business on earth is to prepare for heaven, and to be working out their salvation with fear and trembling; and this they do, not in their own

strength, but through the good spirit of God disposing and enabling them. By this Spirit they are enabled to overcome the world, to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and to mortify the deeds of the body. In this manner are they waiting for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name alone they look for salvation, by whose righteousness only they expect to be justified, and whose Spirit it is which sanctifies and seals them to the day of redemption.

Such is the scriptural description of true Christians. If any think the character too highly drawn, let them read their Bibles, and then judge. What part is there of the above description, of which they will not there find ample confirmation? Let us see, then, how far mankind in general answer to this description.

Some few there are, and have been in all ages, who feeling their guilty and depraved state, and being sensible how justly they are exposed to the wrath of God, have fled to Jesus Christ in true repentance and faith, and received him as all their salvation, and all their desire; from that time they have been led by his Spirit, and taking up their cross, have walked in the footsteps of their Saviour, renouncing the world, and despised by it; and

being blameless, and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they shine as lights in the world!

These, however, are but a very small proportion of the Christian world; the generality are living in pleasure, dead while they live; leading a selfish, worldly life; at a distance from God, and at enmity against him; yet self-satisfied, trusting in their own righteousness; and though talking of the merits of Christ, yet knowing no other peace of conscience than what arises from the contemplation of their own supposed virtues; and disliking the great Scripture doctrine of justification by faith, through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Now truly humble and serious Christians, living amongst such characters, must have many feelings very similar to those which the Christians of old would have, with respect to their heathen neighbours. They cannot but see that there is an essential difference between their own state and character, and that of careless or self-righteous persons. However humble, and however unwilling to judge others, or to think highly of themselves; they cannot but see that the generality of those around them have not that penitent Spirit,

that regard to eternal things, and that sense of the preciousness of Christ, which they through grace possess. They cannot but see, that the spirit in which men of the world live, is the very same with that in which they themselves once lived, and which they now perceive to be the broad way that leads to destruction. Nay, if they could be blind to all this, they are not suffered to be so. They are soon told that they are going too far, and becoming righteous over-much. Their former vain companions wonder at them, and speak evil of them, because they will no longer run to the same excess of riot. The world discovers that they are not its own, and therefore hates them. What signifies it then, that they live among Christians so called, if it be among Christians who are offended at their Christianity, and who would wish to draw them from that strict, serious, and devout Spirit in which the mind of Christ consists, to that worldly and pleasure-loving temper which is the character of those that know not God? Do they not need the same watchfulness to guard against seductions, the same prudence to avoid offence, the same consideration to obviate prejudices, the same firmness in resisting opposition, and the same charity in seeking the salvation of those that oppose the truth, by meekly instructing them,

and endeavouring to win them by the courteous and inoffensive tenour of their lives?

The rule, we see, is strictly applicable to serious Christians at the present time. They must "walk in wisdom toward them that are without." And the wisdom in which they must walk, in order to do good to others, and escape harm themselves, will consist in the following things—decision, gentleness, consistency, discrimination, and cheerfulness.

1. Decision. This is a principal part of that wisdom with which a believer must walk towards them that are without. For if he escapes any difficulties or sufferings by want of decision, he escapes them only by betraying his cause. A Christian must be prepared to go straight on in the way of duty, through evil report and good report, through honour and dishonour.

This steady and determined purpose is the part of wisdom, whether he respects his own safety and comfort, or the good of others. As to his own comfort and safety, nothing so much encourages the men of the world to assail a serious Christian, whether by flatteries, or ridicule, or reproach; as the hope of success. If the servant of Christ seems to be wavering; if there be some prospect that he will give up any point in doctrine or practice, and conform

more to the custom of the world, and the habits of his associates; he may expect no rest till he has given up one thing after another, and till nothing more than the mere name of Christianity is left him. On the contrary, where men see a firm and determined purpose to proceed in the way of duty, they cease to offer a fruitless opposition; nay, they are even afraid to oppose the resolute Christian, lest the simple but convincing answer of truth should be painful to their consciences, and fill them with confusion of face. It is not uncommon with profane men to restrain their licentious converse in the presence of men of determined piety; nay, in such company, they will even express sentiments in favour of godliness. This being the case, the decided Christian is, by his decision, kept from danger, and saved from much disquietude.

He is also much more likely, on the same account, to do good to others. A doctrine cannot appear important, when its very advocates waver in its defence; nor can any one recommend a course of conduct in which he walks so timidly and hesitatingly, as to seem himself in doubt whether it is right or wrong. Would we impress upon others a sense of the importance of the truth of the gospel, we must not ourselves depart from it, even for a mo-

ment. Would we recommend Christian practice, we must shew that we are convinced of its real excellence by our steady continuance in it. Thus, the first branch of Christian wisdom towards them that are without, whether it respects the safety and comfort of the Christian himself, or the salvation of others, is decision.

The next which I shall mention is gentleness.

2. It will always be questionable, whether the decision which appears in a man's character be a part of that wisdom which is from above, unless it be accompanied with gentleness. There are many things that may make a man decided, besides principle: a positive temper, the pride of understanding, self-will, and a high opinion of his own righteousness. When these false principles are the supports of a man's decision of character, it will appear by his being deficient in other equally important parts of the Christian temper. He will indeed be firm in maintaining the truth; but not patient towards those that oppose themselves. He will not, perhaps, give up any point of duty which he deems of consequence; but he will be equally bent on his own way, in matters where conscience and duty are not concerned. An unaccomo-

dating, uncomplying spirit, if it does not give room to suspect that self-will is the ground of his religious firmness; will yet render that firmness unamiable. As he knows not how to become all things to all men, in things indifferent; there will be little hope of his winning them to agree with him in things important. His general manner will not tend to conciliate, but to repel; and, therefore, at least as far as the good of others is concerned, he cannot be said to walk in wisdom towards them that are without. His is not that meekness of wisdom which the gospel inculcates, and by which the gospel is adorned.

I have mentioned gentleness in particular, because it is the proper check to decision. It is that which proves decision to be Christian fortitude, not merely constitutional firmness. But, though in this point of view, gentleness deserved a distinct mention; yet the Christian, in walking wisely towards them that are without, must extend his care much further, and aim at a deportment in every respect blameless and exemplary.

I mention, therefore, as a third branch of Christian wisdom, consistency.

3. The Christian who knows his own heart, and understands what are the views and feelings of unregenerate men, must know that

mankind are naturally averse to those doctrines with which he considers salvation to be essentially connected. The doctrine of justification by faith alone, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, without any mixture of human works being suffered to be joined with it in the affair of justification, they consider as disparaging the better part of mankind, by putting them on a level with the worse; and even as opening a door to licentiousness: while the doctrine of the new birth, and the work of the Spirit, or the understanding, and will, they regard as an enthusiastic imagination. This being the case, wherever these doctrines are professed, and but ill supported by a holy life, they will not fail to take advantage of such inconsistency. And not only the scandalous conduct of hypocrites and false professors; but the occasional failings and infirmities of good men, will be turned against the peculiar doctrines which they profess.

Let, then, every one who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. Let those who profess to be seeking salvation by faith, be careful that they do not give occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully; but let them study in all things to adorn the doctrine of their God and Saviour. Let them not be negligent in the duties of their station, what-

ever it may be, but exemplary in diligence; that no one observing them, may be able to say, that religion unfits men for the duties of active life; but may rather be constrained to confess, that it qualifies them for those duties in an eminent degree. In the different relations which subsist between man and man, let professing Christians likewise consider what they owe to those with whom they are connected as husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, magistrates, subjects. Let them read over and over with prayer and self-application, the directions given in Scripture to men and women in these relations. For often will it happen, that in these several relations, one party will be religious, the other irreligious; and a great effect must be produced on the mind of the latter, by the conduct of the religious party. If, for example, an irreligious master finds his religious servant inattentive to his proper business, or wanting in respect, will he not be led to think unfavourably of religion from such conduct in one who professes it. Perhaps he may not make the allowances which ought to be made; but it is the part of a religious man to render such allowances as little necessary as possible.

A profession of evangelical religion makes superior holiness of life, therefore, peculiarly

necessary. For if a man professing to have believed in Christ, and received of his Spirit, shews a worldly, covetous, or selfish disposition; or is slothful in business, or too much given to sensual indulgence; what less does he do, than charge the faith of Christ with producing such effects as these; and impress the minds of men with the thought that covetousness, sloth, and sensuality, are the fruits of the Spirit, instead of all goodness, righteousness, and truth?

4. In order to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without," discrimination must be used. By discrimination I particularly mean an attention to times and circumstances.

Here, perhaps, more Christian skill is required than in any of the former particulars. It is, however, an indispensable part of wisdom. Without this, the Christian will fail of giving a just and favourable impression of his religion; and will in many cases occasion offence, which by discreet management might have been avoided. Here, then, lies the peculiar province of Christian prudence. It is evident, that what is very proper to be said and done on some occasions, is equally improper to be said and done on others. For every thing there is a season, says Solomon,

a time for every purpose under heaven, and every thing is beautiful in his season. But if an improper season be taken, that which is beautiful and beneficial in itself, may become offensive and hurtful.

Take, for instance, the duty of reproving sin. What more beautiful than well-timed and well-directed reproof, administered in a gentle and loving Spirit! It is compared by St. Paul to the light. What more glorious than light, what more useful! but reproof partakes of the nature of light; for the things which are reproved, are made manifest by the light; and that which maketh manifest, is light. Solomon also commends reproof, saying, "that as apples of gold, in pictures of silver; so is a wise reprover on an obedient ear." Yet reproof may be so administered, as to be rather evil than good. The apostle Peter says, "Rebuke not an elder." Rebuke is good, but the subjection of the younger to the elder is also good. Never, then, let the younger or the inferior, under the notion of administering reproof, forget that deference and respect which must be paid to superiority in age and station. It is represented by the prophet Isaiah as a deplorable state of things, when the child behaves frowardly to the an-

cient, and the base to the honourable; but if times and circumstances are not attended to, something of this confusion may be introduced into society, even under the idea of discharging a religious duty.

What I have instanced in the one example of reproof, is true of many other things; particularly the introducing of religious subjects into conversation. Here discrimination is needful, before whom we speak, at what time, in what place. It is impossible to give particular directions on so large a subject; but we may observe, that the remarks which a religious man makes in the company of irreligious persons, will often most advantageously begin with what they are all agreed in: as the resurrection, judgment to come, heaven, hell, providence, and so on. There are a great many very important truths of Christianity which are admitted by all, even nominal Christians. The Christian should know how to take advantage of this common ground. If he can bring men to converse with him seriously on what they themselves admit; when their attention is awake, and their hearts are alive to the subject, he may have an opportunity of drawing them on farther, and leading their thoughts to those peculiar truths of the

gospel which they had hitherto disregarded, or against which they had entertained unreasonable prejudices.

5. I might here conclude, were it not advisable to notice one misconception which the men of the world generally entertain respecting serious religion. They consider it as a melancholy thing; and therefore it may be very necessary for those who would walk in wisdom toward them, to endeavour to convince them of the contrary. Yet there is a peculiar delicacy in this matter. It is easy to say, be cheerful, in the company of such persons; but cheerfulness cannot be assumed at pleasure; and if merely assumed, it will both sit awkwardly, and be hanging out false colours. A religious man has his joys, and he has his sorrows also; and when the latter are upon him, the vain mirth of ungodly men will not be likely to dissipate them; nor, if it should, would the effect be good. What is to be done, then? A Christian must discourage sinful merriment; yet he must at the same time shew, that he is no enemy to innocent mirth, and that joy is not a stranger to his breast. How shall he discharge this delicate duty? How avoid either extreme, of severity or lightness?

I believe the best direction is, that he should learn to rejoice in the Lord. The joy which he has in God will not only fill his soul with delight; but will also purify his heart, and make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; so that while the peace and comfort of his mind dispose him to ready rejoicing, and to partake of every innocent occasion of joy; he will instantly feel when such rejoicing becomes inconsistent with the Spirit of the gospel.

And as it is with this particular of joy, so of all the rest it is equally true, that the way to adorn the gospel in every respect, is to have the principle of it deep in the heart. Men dishonour the gospel which they profess, only because they do little more than profess it. Let its great truths be deeply impressed in their hearts, and they will not materially discredit the doctrine which they hold in any respect whatever. Remember, it is not talking of justification by faith, but believing in Christ, that you may be justified, and have peace of conscience through his blood—It is not only holding the new birth as an opinion; but becoming new creatures, and being born again, which is to make you meet for heaven, and to qualify you for doing credit to your

profession. Believe, then, in Christ for remission of sins; believe in him for the spirit of life; so shall you have peace and holiness, be happy in yourselves, and adorn the gospel.

SERMON XIX.

1 Peter, v. 5.

Be clothed with humility.

HUMILITY is that peculiar Christian grace, without which other graces could not exist; and by which every other is beautified, and rendered still more lovely. It is, therefore, much recommended in holy Scripture. I hardly know any thing which Jesus Christ himself more frequently inculcates. Witness that repeated declaration: "every one that exexalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Several of his parables are directed to explain, or recommend this leading virtue. Such is the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican; and such also that, in which, under the image of a

feast, he warns the guests not to sit down in the highest room, lest they should have the mortification of having to give way to others more honourable than they; but to take the lowest room, so that being called to a higher place, they may have worship in the presence of those that sit at meat with them. He himself was an example of humility. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and in washing his disciples' feet, he has set us a pattern of condescension. His apostles also, in their various exhortations, have not forgotten this part of the Christian character. To put on humbleness of mind is Paul's precept; and similar to it is that of Peter in the text: "be clothed with humility." Humility is thus represented by the apostle as a garment, covering the whole man; hiding, indeed, other graces, but itself forming no mean ornament.

This excellent grace it is my present object to explain and recommend. And I beg your attention, while I shew how humility becomes us

As creatures.

As sinners. And

As believers.

I. Man as the creature of God, occupies no mean place in the scale of creation; and is

endowed with many noble and excellent gifts. He is made only a little lower than the angels, crowned with dignity and honour, and invested with dominion over the inferior works of his creator. The very form of his body marks his pre-eminence; while the endowments of speech and reason do still more highly exalt him. And it makes no part of humility whatever, to degrade ourselves from our due rank, or to disparage those gifts by which God has distinguished us. But after all, the powers of man are very limited. How scanty is his knowledge! How confined the sphere of his exertion! It is little that he knows; it is little that he can do. And his best powers, his goodliest appearance, how soon does it vanish away! All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; and in like manner perisheth all the glory of man. And further, it is always to be remembered, that his faculties of every kind, whatever they are, are the gift of God.

In the practical recollection of these two truths, consists that humility which we should maintain as creatures: that we should neither over-rate our powers, nor boast of them, as if they were self-produced. How commonly is the law of humility broken in both these re-

spects! What is more common, than for men to think too highly of their own understanding? Hence they intrude into things not seen, and exercise themselves in great matters, vainly puffed up with their fleshly mind. How many, with a blind confidence in their own powers, undertake things for which they have no talent whatever; and, when their enterprises fail through mismanagement, attribute the failure to any thing in the world, rather than their own want of capacity.

But further, whatever talents men have, God is the giver of them. To him belongs the praise; and they should be faithfully used to his glory. How contrary to the spirit of humility is it, for men to seek admiration to themselves for that which is indeed the gift of God! Yet what good gift of the Most High is there, on account of which the vain heart of man does not court applause? Some seek to be admired for their wealth; they boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; they vie with others, and are pained to see themselves outstripped in the race of opulence and splendour. Others wish to be extolled for personal accomplishments, for strength or agility of body, for beauty of person, or vigour of understanding. Allied to some of these are

the embellishments of dress and fashion, by which many seek a frivolous distinction.

The practical error in these cases is, that man in the pride of his heart forgets that all these things are from the Lord; and instead of the sober use and thankful enjoyment of them, whereby God might be glorified and his neighbour benefited, seeks from them a vain-glorious pre-eminence. Now this is a departure from the proper spirit of a *creature*. A forgetfulness of that frailty and that dependence which belong to our condition. Surely the temper becoming a frail and dependent mortal, would be justly expressed in language such as this: 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man that thou visitest him? Shall I talk of wisdom, or strength, or beauty, or riches, or honour, who am but dust and ashes? I have all, or any of these things, just so long as thou pleasest, and not one moment longer. When thou takest away my breath I die, and am turned again to my dust! Then all my thoughts perish: all high imaginations, and all vain-glorious conceits, must one day be extinguished in the grave.' Such is the humility which becomes us as creatures; a lowly, dependent spirit, sensible of ignorance, weakness, and insufficiency.

Before I quit this part of my subject, and proceed to the second branch of humility; I must observe, that the temptation to pride, and consequently the exercise of humility, has very much to do with a *comparative* view of ourselves and others. It is not in the vast superiority which we possess over the inferior creatures, that we are apt either to exaggerate the difference, or to boast, or to forget that it is from God; but it is in the little overplus which one man possesses above another, whether of mental endowments, or bodily powers, or worldly wealth. It is this lesser distinction, the comparative difference between man and man, which excites envy and jealousy in one party, and creates haughtiness and lofty looks in the other. But the judgment of real humility is according to truth in this respect also. It judges, that the same wise appointment which made angels what they are, and man what he is; and which made man lower than the angels, but above the beasts of the field; assigns also to every individual his place, station, and measure of talent; so that no one has any thing to boast of, but each is called upon to improve rightly the trust committed to him; neither envying those that are above, nor despising those that are below him. If we honestly examine our own hearts here, we

shall discover how much we are concerned in the second part of my subject.

II. The humility which becomes us as sinners.

What we have hitherto seen of humility is in some measure within the compass of man's natural powers, unrenewed by divine grace. At least, as far as the outward expression goes, education and good sense are sufficient to keep men within reasonable bounds. A boaster is so generally ridiculed, that regard to character itself secures a considerable appearance of modesty and humility. We see none but ignorant and ill-bred people evidently full of themselves, and trumpeting their own praises. The advice of Solomon, "Let another man praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips;" is not unsuited to the temper of the age. But the *language* of humility may be used, when the *spirit* is altogether wanting; and men may in some measure be really humbled as *creatures*, when they are far from being humbled as *sinners*. Nevertheless, sin is that which is the true cause for humiliation. Our situation as creatures affords reason why we should not boast, but no reason for shame. It is sin which has rendered us, not only low and weak, but also vile.

It is a small thing that we are but of yesterday; that our faculties are very limited, and our days on earth as a shadow; still our condition, if we continued upright, would in its measure be truly honourable. But sin, which is the transgression of God's holy law, and the greatest of evils in the judgment of all holy beings, has made us the objects of God's righteous displeasure; and is therefore the just reason why we should abhor and loathe ourselves. And this charge of depravity lies against all? "What is man, that he should be clean; and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous." Our humility, as sinners, consists in a true self-abasement for the wickedness which dwells in our hearts, and shews itself in our conduct. This is the humility which accompanies salvation. A man may be modest and unassuming, with respect to his fellow-creatures, and thus gain the name of a humble man, while he knows nothing of real humility towards God. But it is in this humiliation on account of sin, that true conversion consists. With this it begins: the heart of stone is taken away, and a heart of flesh given; and the humbled penitent draws near with weeping and supplication. Like the returning prodigal, he says to his Father, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He remembers, with shame and confusion of face, how he has lived in malice and envy, hateful and hating; how he has served divers lusts and pleasures; how foolish, how disobedient he has been; even in the more decent and respectable part of his conduct, living as without God in the world. All this sits heavy on his conscience. With deep seriousness he reflects on his past life, and the imaginations of his heart; and finds, that they have been evil continually. His mouth is stopped; he has not a word to say for himself; he pleads guilty; stands like the publican, at an awful distance; acknowledges his iniquity; and says, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

My dear brethren, as we are all sinners, so we should all be penitents. This lowly and contrite spirit is what becomes our real condition and character. And it is this alone which makes the gospel to be glad-tidings, and that Saviour, whom the gospel proclaims truly precious. The whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. Those who feel not their sin and misery, may call Christ their Saviour in words; and give him a little cold ceremonious attention like Simon the Pharisee, who invited him to his house. But it is the feeling sense of sin, the humbling conviction that

much is forgiven, which warms the heart, which causes the tears to flow, and makes the believing penitent to love much.

Thus humility prepares the way for faith, which cannot exist in a proud heart. His heart which is lifted up, is not upright within him; but the just shall live by his faith. Cultivate then, my brethren, this spirit of humility, from a sense of the fact of sin, and of the evil of sin. Till you have some portion of this, you have no acquaintance whatever with true religion. Look through the Old and New Testaments, you always find this spirit commended, and represented as the first step to true godliness. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Blessed are they that mourn." "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." Sooner or later the time must come, when every transgressor shall be convinced of the evil of sin. And how much better is it to be humbled now to salvation, than to be humbled hereafter with shame and everlasting contempt! See only the evil of sin in this life,

and you may see also, the grace of the Saviour; and believing in him, obtain the forgiveness of your offences, and become the children of God.

But even in this happy state of grace and salvation, the necessity of a humble spirit does not cease. Humility must attend a sinful, though redeemed creature through every stage of his religious course, from the first beginning of repentance, to the highest attainments of holiness; nay, it will not leave him even in the realms of glory. In heaven itself, all is humility. The hosts of the redeemed there cast their crowns before the throne, and ascribe salvation to the Lamb. And if humility becomes perfected Spirits in heaven, much more does it become those who, whatever may be their attainments, are yet compassed with infirmity. Nor is it to be forgotten, that when the apostle says, "be clothed with humility;" the admonition is addressed to believers. We are, therefore, particularly concerned to enquire,

III. What is the character of that humility which is suited to real Christians.

True believers are new creatures in Christ Jesus; they have attained something of their Saviour's image, and possess really excellent and heavenly graces. The deepest humility

does not require that they should suppose this not to be the case, or think of themselves in any respect otherwise than as they are. Without any such denial of the grace of God in them, there is room enough for the exercise of humility.

They must retain a humbling remembrance of past sins; those sins, though *forgiven of God*, must not be *forgotten of them;* but ever borne in mind, that they may see what they are in themselves, and understand how much they owe to redeeming love. This recollection of former sins has a most beneficial effect on the Christian character. It keeps the soul low; makes the dependence on the grace of Christ distinct and simple; and kindles love to him by whose death and suffering iniquity is taken away.

The Christian must also keep his eye much on the present state of his heart. Without watchfulness here, some unsuspected evils may be keeping quiet possession; while he meanwhile is puffed up with a good opinion of himself, instead of being humbled under the discovery of sin. With much diligence and prayer should he observe his own spirit; suspecting himself and praying, search me, O God, and know my heart; prove me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any

wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

By making diligent search, the Christian finds many evils which he thought extinct, still alive, and insensibly producing in his conduct a disadvantageous effect. Love of the world, fear of man, sloth, indulgence, bitterness, self-seeking, vain-glory, with many other evils, he finds still at work; and while he fights against them, he enters into the humbling confession of the apostle; "the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."

Further, whatever measure of holiness the Christian attains to, he must all along remember, that by the grace of God he is what he is. Thus all boasting is excluded, for he has nothing but what he has received; now if he has received it, why should he glory as if he had not received it?

And lastly, there will always remain much to be done; very much land to be possessed. Every grace will ever be defective in measure, and mixed with infirmity. The most faultless disciple will find here cause for humiliation. He loves the brethren, and on the whole with a pure heart, and fervently; but let him ask, is this love without partiality, without respect of persons? Is it patient and forbearing?

Can he bear with the faults of his Christian brethren? Can he suffer long, and be kind? Let him ask such questions as these, and he will find, that a very large field of duty yet unperformed, and of holiness yet unattained, lies before him. So let him catechise his own heart with respect to the love of God, purity, heavenly-mindedness. Say, my brethren, in these things, is all as it should be? What, is there no defect, no blemish? Does your obedience, in affection and deed, come fully up to the demands of the law? You will not say this; and, therefore, the province of Christian humility lies here: to be looking not at what is attained, but at what remains yet to be attained; not at the excellencies, but at the defects of your character. Forget the things that are behind; and reach forth to those that are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I would conclude with two brief admonitions. And first,

Beware of false humility.

Some men deal largely in violent expressions of self-displeasure: they use the very strongest language in speaking of their sins; and hence they appear to others, and probably to themselves too, to be very humble. But this

is no proof of humility. Men who speak so humbly, betray often every symptom of pride. They are arrogant, impatient of contradiction, expecting every one to give way to them; easily offended, and bitterly as they accuse themselves, and call themselves the chief of sinners, they will not endure that any body else should find the least fault with them, or say that they do wrong in any point whatever. Beware of this spirit. The truest penitents have ever employed modest language in expressing their sense of sin. Never let any words you use go beyond the measure of conviction which you distinctly feel; else, you fall into a preposterous kind of hypocrisy, disparaging yourselves to gain the praise of humility; and even deceive your own hearts, and give yourselves credit for being much more humble than you really are.

But while you avoid false humility, labour after the attainment of that which is genuine. Cultivate this grace with all diligence, and shew it not by vehement professions; not by calling all persons to see how humble you are; but by the unfeigned lowliness of your deportment, by your submission to superiors, your condescension to inferiors, and your gentleness towards all. Give proof of your humility by a lowly and contented spirit, satisfied with the

place and portion which God has assigned you; and which grieves not to see others rise above you. Let all aspiring ambitious thoughts die in you, so that you may be able humbly to appeal with David: "Lord I am not high-minded; I have no proud looks." Let the real humility of your spirit also appear in a peaceable carriage towards all men; in a readiness to accommodate yourselves to others, not expecting all men to bow and give way to you: yea, all of you be subject one to another; especially ye that are young, submit yourselves to older persons; servants, be obedient to your own masters. To magistrates, governors, and all that are in authority, shew a ready obedience, not from fear, but for conscience sake; that thus the doctrine of God your Saviour may be adorned.

This is the way to grow in grace; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. And this is the way to be lovely in his sight. You are commanded to be *clothed* with humility. Clothing is used in part for ornament. But what is the outward adorning of the body? a poor perishing distinction! But this adorning angels in heaven admire, and God himself beholds with approbation; for the ornament of a meet and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price. And is not this

enough? Is it not sufficient to call forth, not only your fervent desire; but, I may even say, a sanctified ambition? For there is a real greatness in humility, a grandeur in poverty of spirit; and to be thus glorious within is a much nobler distinction, than the most dazzling outward splendour. For that must perish, but this will endure. Purple and fine linen will fade, and wear away; but the clothing of humility will be richer and more beauteous in the ages of eternity.

SERMON XX.

LUKE, xii. 1, *latter part.*

Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

THE value of religion, like that of golden coin, depends on its purity. It is not enough, that it bear the image and superscription of the King of kings; the material, also, of which it is composed must be good and sterling. It is the care to acquire and preserve this intrinsic worth, which constitutes sincerity in religion; and on the other hand, attention to outward performances, without regard to inward excellence, is the essence of hypocrisy.

This vice is held in so general and just abhorrence, that it is unnecessary for the preacher to

point out its deformity. Yet the very detestation which attends it, contributes in some degree to its prevalence. Every man feels that he hates it, and therefore gives himself credit for being exempt from it. Here he conceives it unnecessary to be on his guard, and thinks that he needs not to watch and pray against the temptations to a vice which he so abhors. Hence, in some it prevails unsuspected; while others are led by insensible degrees into the very depths of it.

One thing we may be sure of: that our Lord would not have cautioned us in such strong terms against this sin, if it were not a sin to which we have a native propensity. When we hear the wisdom of God, lifting up his warning voice, and saying, "beware of hypocrisy;" we may safely conclude, that he who knew what was in man, testifies of man that which is true. And therefore, instead of proudly assuming that we are in no danger of hypocrisy; we should rather remember, that the more hateful the sin is, the greater should be our diligence to take heed and beware of it.

Do not therefore, my brethren, spurn at the consideration of this subject, as if it were one in which you had no concern; but suffer the word of exhortation, while I shew,

I. The nature, and various forms of hypocrisy.

II. The temptations which may lead to it.

III. The certain detection of it, and its issue in shame and ruin.

I. In order to ascertain precisely the nature of hypocrisy, perhaps the most satisfactory way will be to go back to the original meaning of the term. The word which we translate hypocrite, signified one who assumed a feigned character, and acted a pretended part. Hence, in its most familiar use, it denoted a stage-player. An actor or actress was as naturally understood by the Greek word, as by the same word in its English form and use, is understood a false pretender to religion.

In saying this, I do not mean to cast a slur on the profession of the stage; for I well know that this profession, like every other, must be judged of by its own merits, and not by names and sounds. If theatrical amusements are innocent and rational, if the stage does not corrupt the morals, but is a school of virtuous instruction; then it can be no disparagement to such a profession, that the name by which it was originally called, is one that may be understood in a worse signification. If, on the other hand, most dramatic compositions cherish false sentiments, and strengthen

bad passions; if the whole business of the stage, the dresses of the actors and actresses, the dances, the songs, tend to gratify and inflame corrupt propensities; and if the effect of all this is heightened and impressed on the mind with full force, by the music and scenery; if it be true also, that these representations hold out a temptation to poor unthinking men to spend, in pernicious diversion, the wages by which their families should subsist; it is by pointing out these evils that the theatre is to be legitimately attacked, and not by affixing either to the performers, or to their occupation, an odious name.

But, to return from this digression, as an actor on the stage sustains a character which is not his own; and as the excellence of his performance consists in expressing the sentiments of that assumed character, as if he actually felt them, and as if he were in truth what he appears to be. Such is the hypocrite in religion. He acts a part; he seems to be what he is not; and the more he represents religion to the life, the more finished hypocrite he is.

It would be difficult to point out the different shades and degrees in which hypocrisy exists, and the various forms which it assumes. So various are these forms, that if we take the

most remote of them, we shall find men brought by the same hypocrisy to opposite extremes in conduct: some hypocritically professing more religion than they really possess; others hypocritically concealing the religious convictions which they feel: some engaging in religious duties for which they have no relish, to obtain praise from men; others, for the sake of this same praise, from men of a different description, not venturing on those religious duties to which conscience urges them. Nay, in the very same person, both these opposites will often be combined; and he will sometimes be more, and sometimes less religious, than the pure consideration of conscience towards God would lead him to be, according to the nature of the *duty before him*, or the *character of the persons with whom he is*. Some *duties are fashionable*, these have many advocates; others are singular, and these few will venture to perform, because they have not the sanction of the world. So, to be religious, *in religious company*, is no hard matter; and many a man then discovers what an excellent thing religion is, who in other company is a very different character.

Of the many that attend public worship, few perhaps have family worship in their own

houses; and perhaps fewer still will venture to introduce religious discourse in ordinary conversation. There are some religious acts which are popular, these many will do; but there are also irreligious practices which are popular, these they will do also. We must be like other people, is a very common expression with such persons; but let them understand, that if they would be religious to any purpose, they must, in many things, not be like other people. Saint Paul has said, "be not conformed to this world;" and those who dare not openly confess Christ, nor go any farther in religion than the world will allow them, will find at last, that the fear of God, which is taught by the precept of man, is nothing better than hypocrisy in God's esteem, and will be treated as such in the great day.

II. In considering the temptations which lead to hypocrisy, it may be proper to observe, that the character is generally formed by circumstances. Perhaps few instances could be found of men deliberately determining on a system of hypocrisy in the beginning of their course: but either from the desire of esteem, and fear of reproach, their religion is gradually moulded into a conformity with that of the world around them; or else, peculiar circumstances betray them into grosser instances

and degrees of hypocrisy. The temptations which have most frequently produced this mournful effect, are such as the following:

A hasty profession of religion often proves a temptation to this sin. A young person brought up amongst religious friends, hearing much of religion, and finding it approved, and being bound in duty to join in many religious exercises, may be led to estimate his own character and attainments too highly; to consider some good impressions and feelings as marks of conversion; and in consequence of this, to make a more distinct profession of godliness, and to desire to be looked upon as decidedly pious. The character being thus assumed must be kept up; and is sometimes kept up in forms and phrases, when in the temper and general conduct, it is woefully denied. This is, indeed, delicate ground. We are not to discourage young beginners from avowing their love of the truth. We are not to make them afraid of witnessing a good confession. On the contrary, we should warn them against being ashamed of Christ, and encourage them to confess him before men. But though they should be ready to give every man a reason of the hope that is in them, we should instruct them to do it with meekness and fear. We should caution them against rash professions,

which often end in looking back after they have put their hand to the plough, and thus shewing themselves not fit for the kingdom of God. We should admonish them to count the cost, and not to begin to build till they have good reason to believe that they can finish: for perhaps no other source is more productive of hypocrisy in the end, than hasty profession in the beginning.

Another source of hypocrisy is enthusiasm. This may appear to be quite the reverse. The feelings of enthusiasts are, it may be said, real though deluded; and the very excesses to which they are led, seem a pledge for their sincerity, and may be thought to prove, that though mistaken in judgment, they are at least upright in principle. But experience proves, that there is often a great measure both of real enthusiasm and real hypocrisy in the same characters. At first, indeed, the enthusiasm is comparatively pure and unmixed. But enthusiasts have generally their followers and admirers; and the desire of distinction among these will lead them to extravagant pretensions of divine communications, which they partly believe through a heated imagination, and partly exaggerate through hypocrisy and love of applause. Hence the existence of such characters as a Boccold and

Muncer in former times, and a Southcote in our own.

Another very common cause of hypocritical profession is the desire of compensating for some secret sin. A man, not without conscience, nor destitute of regard to religious character, is the slave of some lust. This is a bosom, a beloved sin. Part with it he cannot. It is dear to him as a right hand, or a right eye. What will he do, then? Why, he will make compensation for it. His beloved indulgence he cannot forego; but he will be doubly assiduous in all other duties of religion. He will give more alms, attend the ordinances of worship more duly, and join the company of religious people. Alas, vain man! As long as that one sin of thine remains unmortified, thou hast no real religion, and therefore these outward expressions of it are nothing else than hypocrisy. Multiply them as much as thou pleasest, they are but so many hypocritical pretences. One thing is needful—the sacrifice of thy bosom sin; which, as long as it is cherished, must be an insuperable bar of separation between thy soul and God. In vain dost thou please thyself with thy duties, for God does not accept them; and still more vainly dost thou try to bolster thyself by high doctrines. In vain dost thou try

to comfort thyself with the persuasion, that those who are once in a state of grace, are always in a state of grace; and that the elect can never finally perish. I do not now stop to enquire whether these doctrines are true. Let it be granted that they are so, and that they convey wholesome nourishment to those who are sound in faith and charity; to thee they are deadly poison, they serve to harden thy heart, and to embolden thee to go on, prating about religion, decrying legal doctrines, and speaking high swelling words of vanity about salvation by grace and faith, when all the while thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, because thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

Again, the times in which a man lives have often a great influence in producing a certain appearance of religious conduct, without a corresponding measure of inward religion. At different periods, the temptation this way will be of different kinds. In the times of Oliver Cromwell, the fashion of the day led to a canting religious phraseology; which species of hypocrisy was in after times remembered with so much disgust, that the nation fell into the opposite extreme, and the very mention of religion was almost exploded. In our times, a happier and nobler taste prevails; and we

behold with joy numerous religious institutions, highly calculated to promote the glory of God, and the everlasting welfare of mankind, supported by very general contributions, and encouraged by almost universal approbation. Such a fact we cannot contemplate without the sincerest pleasure; and we wish the contributors to the Bible Society, to the Society for promoting Christian knowledge, and to the various Missionary Societies, were ten times more numerous than they are. But, I ask, can we fairly estimate from this, the degree in which real, personal religion prevails? Can we confidently conclude, that concern for spreading the Bible is the genuine expression of love for the Bible? Are the lives of those who give the Bible away, regulated by that holy volume which they do so well in dispersing? Are none actuated in this thing by a less pure motive; by the mere influence of fashion, or a secret desire of credit? As the friend of the Bible Society, I wish you to support it; and as the friend of your immortal souls, I wish that support to be from the pure principle of love to God and man, unmixed with any baser considerations. And what I say of the Bible Society, I say also of Missionary Societies. How gladly do I see some of you contributing as annual subscribers to this

good work; others forming associations for smaller weekly payments; and with joy I remember your liberal congregational collections. But I must in faithfulness remind you, that all this, nay a hundred times more than all this, is nothing; unless it be the genuine fruit of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love to your fellow immortals. No action is truly religious, unless it proceeds from these principles; and the most splendid work, if done to obtain praise from men, or to procure the credit of religion, is but an act of hypocrisy.

Lastly, the mixture of worldly interests, or official services, with religious duties, is often a source of hypocrisy.

An instance or two will best explain this.

A man may receive the holy communion in a truly devout and Christian manner, although he is thereby qualifying for an office. But if he receives it *in order to qualify* for an office, without the humility, faith, love, and thankfulness which the ordinance supposes, he then receives it hypocritically. Church-wardens, and other church-officers, will see here, that their official attendance subjects them to a like temptation, against which they will do well to watch and pray, that they may attend the ordinances profitably to their souls, as well as officially; and

that they may discharge their important trust in such a manner as may tend to the glory of God, and the good order of the church. It is evident that the same thing is true of ministers: their temptation is the same; the same their need of vigilant caution. A minister *must* be the mouth of the congregation to pray and preach, whatever be the state of his own heart. Surely, every minister who knows himself, must know that he has need of all watchfulness, that he may not seem to pray when he is not praying, nor preach to others what he feebly feels himself.

We shall see how much reason every person has to be on his guard on this point; how little he can gain by false religion, and how much he loses, if we consider,

III. The certain detection of counterfeit religion, and the shame and ruin in which it will issue.

Our Lord himself subjoins to his caution against hypocrisy, the strongest consideration that can possibly be urged. "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." A day is coming when God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil. Then the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; and those

works, and those only which have been done in faith and love, shall receive a gracious reward; these shall be accepted as sterling, when all others are rejected as counterfeit.

Such then, my beloved brethren, as you would wish your religion to be found in that day; give diligence that it may *be* now. Think not that you have no need to watch and pray against hypocrisy, to labour for sincerity. No need! Be persuaded rather, that you have the greatest need. Be aware that your hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. If you be not on your guard, your religion will be formed by the precept of men, and the maxims of the world; it will be made compatible with worldly lusts and secret sins: and what sort of a religion is that?

Endeavour, then, to put men entirely out of sight; care not, in any duty which you perform, or course of conduct on which you are deliberating, what men will think or say; but what God requires, and what will please him. Let your *private duties* ever keep pace with your *public exertions* in the cause of truth; that you may not appear outwardly splendid in showy performances, while inwardly meagre in faith, hope, and love. Let your religion be not a set of insulated acts,

but a living principle, a faith which worketh by love. Pray for the increase of this faith continually. It is the sight of Jesus, full of grace and truth, full of mercy and love, which is to win your hearts to love him, and make you zealous of good works. Pray that you may daily increase in this knowledge of Jesus Christ, that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Then sin will be sweetly overcome, and corrupt motives of doing good will be superseded by purer and better. When you truly believe, human praise will appear to you a poor reward of good works; you will seek a richer recompence, even the praise which cometh of God only. Content with the approbation of your God and Saviour, you will pursue your even course through evil report and good report, through honour and dishonour; and while the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment; while the hope of the hypocrite shall be as a spider's web, and his house built on the sand shall fall; your faith and profession, founded on a rock, shall stand and be established; your peace shall abound;

you shall go from strength to strength; and your path shall be as the rising light, which shineth more and more, unto the perfect day.

SERMON XXI.

MATTHEW, XVI. 24.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.

AS there is no precept which sounds more forbidding than this, so there is none which is more universally neglected. Men in general contrive to keep it out of sight, to forget, to evade, to explain it away, to rebel against it; in short, to do any thing rather than fairly meet it with an upright obedience. And it is not difficult to account for this. Every other commandment will bear hard upon some, but sit easy on others. The sober-minded worldling will not be unwilling to flee from fleshly lusts; and the extravagant sensualist will be ready enough to hear covetousness and care

about the morrow condemned in such a strong manner by our Lord. But when a man is bid to deny himself; no man can feel himself excused; no man can say, this does not concern me; for it is not prodigality only that is condemned, nor covetousness only, nor drunkenness, nor lust, nor anger, nor any one sin, or number of particular sins; but it is the breaking of a man's will, the renouncing his own purpose and inclination, and submitting himself entirely to the will of God.

There is, therefore, not in the heart of *some* only, but of all, a strong opposition to this precept. No man's inclination can naturally favour a commandment which bids him deny it. However it may conduce to his comfort afterwards, it must be unwelcome for the present. If he submits to it at all, it is for the sake of that future good; and he is slow in learning to make war against his own inclination as a dangerous enemy. Thus, it is easy to see how it comes to pass, that most men entirely reject the precept of our Lord contained in the text; that few shew any sort of steady and conscientious regard to it; and that all in some degree neglect it; so that none can be found who go upon such a deliberate and determined plea of self-denial; so carefully enquiring into the will of Christ, and so

watchfully guarding against their own, as not in many instances to indulge self-will, though not to the ruin of their souls, yet to their prejudice and hinderance in their spiritual progress. Hence it is, that among those who profess the Christian faith, there are so few who live as Christians ought to do ; so few humble, watchful, patient, contented, heavenly-minded disciples of Jesus ; so few who fairly take his yoke upon them. And, therefore, so few who experience the divine comforts and heavenly consolations of God's holy Spirit.

It is indeed possible to mistake the nature of this duty, and under the notion of self-denial to practise severities which God has not enjoined. Christian self-denial requires wisdom, as well as faithfulness. But whoever has conscientiously practised it, though with but an imperfect insight into the nature and intention of the duty, will find that by doing so he has escaped many a snare, and many a sorrow ; while he who has walked deceitfully in this respect, and endeavoured to dispense with the self-denying duties of religion, will most assuredly find that he has forfeited much peace and comfort, which he would have found in the way of self-denial, and met with much vexation which he would otherwise have escaped.

These general remarks may be sufficient to shew how much we are all concerned in the subject before us. Earnestly do I beg the divine assistance in explaining it more particularly, and recommending it more fully.

I. I will endeavour to give you some insight into the general nature of self-denial; at the same time correcting some mistakes concerning it.

II. Shew the great necessity of attending to the duty.

I do not know how to explain the nature of self-denial better than by shewing how it is to be practised in some particular cases to which it is to be applied. The few that I shall notice shall be, the management of time and money, the giving way to others for peace sake, and the use of the means of grace. On all except the last I shall be very brief.

1. The employment of time. When men have time at their own disposal, it is natural that they should dispose of it according to their inclination. When a man has his choice what he will do, we may expect that he will do what is most agreeable to him. Yet whoever does so, whoever slothfully follows inclination in the employment of leisure time, will not be likely to grow in grace. If he mixes with the company he likes best, and follows

the diversions which most suit his taste, he cannot fail to meet often with what will not help him forward, but much hinder him in his way to heaven. Such a plan of self-indulgence is moreover very inconsistent with the watchfulness which becomes a Christian conscious of weakness, and exposed to danger. Whereas, if a man is watchful, and conscientious in the management of that portion of time which is at his own disposal; if in this he does not consult inclination, but the will of God; if he enquires respecting even innocent recreations, how far they may affect his soul; how far they are expedient, as well as lawful; or how far upon the whole his time might have been better disposed of; such self-denial will not only keep him from many snares, and be the means of his more abundant fruitfuless; but the very disposition itself is so agreeable to the spirit and nature of Christianity, that it will make many other duties easy to him; which to the less watchful, or more indulgent, would be very grievous.

2. Thus, with regard to money. As the labouring part of mankind have not much spare time; so the generality have no more money than what is absolutely necessary for the support of their families. The duty of these, therefore, is to be industrious, frugal, and ho-

nest; and the only self-denial, with respect to money, which is required of them, generally speaking, is that they should not consume in intemperance what is necessary to provide bread for their families. At the same time, if by management and diligence they can give to those who are in greater and unavoidable need, they may remember for their comfort our Lord's favourable acceptance of the widow's mite. But if those who have abundance, exercise no self-denial; some will be inclined to lay up their superfluous wealth; others to spend it in the pursuit of pleasure; and though compassion will incline many to give something to the indigent, yet if no self-denial be employed for the purpose, it is astonishing how little can be spared, even out of a large income, for charitable purposes. If the man must have his own inclination; if, on the one hand, the careful person must lay up such a sum; or if, on the other hand, there must be costly apparel and expensive amusements, and high living, and sumptuous entertainments; self-indulgence encroaches on charity to the needy, and though a man in such case may wish well to the poor, he can do little for them.

3. Further, a sacrifice of our will is often necessary for peace sake. There is nothing in

which more watchful self-denial is necessary, than in the management of that delicate business which is commonly called standing up for a man's right. In a world so selfish as this, there will always be injuries; one man will ever be encroaching on another; and it is natural for the person who believes himself injured, not only to vindicate his right, but also to retaliate for the wrong. Or, if he do not return injury for injury, he may at least be led to indulge a dislike of the offending party, and to give full licence to his tongue in speaking against him. Now, in this case it is not enough to say, that a man ought to deny himself. The indulgence of such evil passions as these deserves a harder name than the mere want of self-denial. If a man gives proofs of resentment and malice, you would not say of him that he had not learnt to deny himself, but would call him a man of a revengeful spirit. The exercise of Christian self-denial which I would recommend, is in those cases where it might seem that a man did no wrong, if he followed his own will.

A man has a right to insist upon his due, to claim his own, and to call in the aid of the law when it is unjustly withheld from him. This is lawful, but it is not always expedient. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, that they had bet-

ter suffer wrong, and allow themselves to be defrauded, than brother go to law with brother. And our Saviour says, "If any man will sue thee at law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." A due attention to these precepts (so contrary to the high and selfish spirit of man, which cannot endure to be imposed upon or over-reached) requires a mind subdued by self-denial, and disciplined from its attachment to the world, so as to bear in silence, not only suffering at the hand of God, but even injuries at the hand of man. Not only forgiving the evil disposition, but in many cases yielding up a known right, rather than engage in quarrels which are injurious to love, and dishonourable to the Christian name.

The same thing may be said with respect to complying with the wishes and desires of others. This should often be done, even against our own; and that not only when the demand is so just, that it would be unreasonable to refuse; but also sometimes for the sake of peace and love when the request is unreasonable. As our Lord says, "If any man will compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain." And St. Peter, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

4. But the example by which I would particularly illustrate the nature and necessity of self-denial, is in the improvement of the means of grace; two, particularly prayer and fasting.

With respect to prayer, as our need of it is continual, so the exercise of it should be constant, steady, fervent, believing. It is not enough to pray from time to time, we must pray instantly; nor with the lips only, it must be in spirit and in truth. But without self-denial this will not be done. If a man does not watch unto prayer with a self-denying vigilance, he will often be in his bed, when he should be at his devotions; and often when on his knees, his heart will be very far from the business of his lips. He who would pray to any purpose, must consider prayer as his work: other things must be made to give way to it. He must contrive how he may best and most successfully carry it on, in the same manner as he would respecting any other business. And sacrifices must be made of ease and pleasure for the sake of it. All this requires self-denial; nay, the mere act of prayer, however delightful it may be to the renewed heart, is very burdensome to the natural man. There is hardly any thing which he would not rather do—strong proof how deep and entire is our fall from God! To pray then at all requires

self-denial; much more to pray constantly, and to give up other things for the sake of prayer.

Fasting, also, is a mean of grace; and here the self-denial is most direct. So evidently is this contrary to the inclination of man, that it has generally either been made an engine of self-righteousness, or altogether neglected. Since fasting is an act of self-denial, an instance of self-government and victory obtained over a man's natural desires; since he who does it to any considerable degree, does a thing which the greater part of mankind can by no means persuade themselves to do; no wonder, considering the pride of the human heart, and how apt men are to pervert what is good—no wonder, I say, considering these things, that it was extravagantly extolled in the dark ages of the church; and that long and rigid fasts were and are looked upon, by superstitious and self-righteous Christians, as heroic and meritorious acts. But though some have made a self-righteous use of fasting; and though in some ages and places it has been carried to excess; this does not prove that fasting is not a mean of grace, of divine appointment. The duty is recommended in Scripture; the abuse of it condemned. We are warned, that pride will be fed by that which starves the body. Touch not, taste not,

handle not, Saint Paul informs us, are dangerous maxims after the commandments and ordinances of men; and that they have but a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour, that is not of any real use, but tending only to satisfy or puff up the flesh, the proud fleshly heart of man. Our Lord has sufficiently guarded against this abuse, by directing, us when we fast, to anoint our head, and wear a cheerful countenance; that we appear not to men to fast, but that the deed may be witnessed by the eye of our Father only.

It is true, even then, if watchfulness be not added, pride and self-complacency may creep in; but is there not equal or greater pride and presumption in setting aside, as unnecessary, a duty which Jesus Christ has very plainly enjoined? Our Lord says expressly, "when ye fast, do so and so;" and adds, "your Father will reward you openly." We say nothing then when we say, that many have abused the practice, and that the religion of Hindoos and Mahometans consists very much in rigours of this kind. What is this to the purpose? The religion of Jesus Christ does not consist in them at all. A man may be a faithful and eminent servant of Christ, who, in certain

circumstances, does not fast. Fasting is not like prayer, needful to the existence of a Christian. It is left very much to the discernment and fidelity of the believer himself; and where health would be injured by it, or the body unfitted for devotion; in that case, or to that degree, it is not required. But what is this to those who never make the experiment, whether it hurts their health and devotion or not?

Should any object, that they cannot see the use of it; to them I say, practise it and you will see. It may be some and no little use, if you learn to do what you are commanded against your own will, merely because you are commanded. There is an unsufferable pride which requires God to give an account of his matters, and will not obey his plain commands without knowing why he orders so and so, and what is the use of this and that act. The Lord says, "I will lead the blind by a way which they know not." But how shall the blind be thus led, if they will not stir a step without seeing where they go, and what is the reason of each movement? Commend me to the humility of that disciple, who seeing clearly that fasting is what our Lord speaks of with approbation; nay, partly enjoins as what is agreeable to his Father; attempts in the strength of Christ to find out

the benefit of it by implicitly obeying the injunction. Such a one is in the way to be led safely and comfortably to that marriage feast, where the children of the bride-chamber can fast no more, because the bridegroom will be always with them. And I really cannot account for it, why all professing Christians do not thus judge and act; but because the pride of enquiring and reasoning blinds some, and the sloth of fleshly indulgence chains down others.

Thus have I endeavoured, in a few particulars, to explain the nature of self-denial; but those particulars are far from exhausting the subject; they only throw light on a principle which must run through all we do, viz. the principle of denying self—our self-will, our self-righteousness, our self-preference, our love of ease, our love of reputation, our love of money, our love of pleasure and amusement, of gaiety and dress, or graver fondness for business, or favourite studies. So that none of these things should be the principle on which we act; but the love of God reign, and his will take place of ours; every imagination which exalts itself against the knowledge of him, being cast down; and every thought brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ.

II. Having treated the first head so much at large, I must endeavour to be more brief upon the second, which is to shew the absolute necessity of attending to this duty.

The great necessity of this will appear in the first place very strongly, from the manifold evils which result from neglecting it. In imposing self-denial upon us, our Father does nothing more than we do to children, crossing their wills to prevent their ruin. These precepts, which look so rigid, are as a hedge of thorns about us, to keep us from mischief and danger. To instance in one thing—I believe very few would be brought into that disgraceful slavery to their bodily appetites, in drunkenness and excess, in which we see so many sunk, if men early accustomed themselves to fasting, and abstinence on religious principle.

St. Paul teaches us, that the body, by being indulged, becomes the master. "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." It may seem as if little mischief could follow from allowing to our bodies innocent and lawful delights. But the question is not whether such delights are to be allowed; but rather, whether they are not sometimes to be withheld—withheld, though innocent—withheld, though lawful;

and withheld for this very purpose, that appetite may be sometimes disappointed and learn to submit. The appetite, if always gratified in its cravings, becomes like a child which always gets what it cries for, unreasonable in its wants, and never to be pleased. And hence arises that unseemly discontent and propensity to find fault with their ordinary food, which many shew. The fault is not so much in the provisions, as in their own unmortified desire: "The full soul loatheth a honeycomb." Hence, too many seeking in vain from moderate indulgence that undue delight which they thirst after, learn at last to pursue it through every excess of riot. Thus, what was regular appetite, becomes inordinate lust; and those who would not hold the reins while they had them, are run away with by unbridled sensuality.

And as there would be less intemperance and excess among men in general, if the self-denying precepts of the gospel were attended to; so there would be more credit brought to the gospel by professors of godliness, and they would have much more comfort in their own souls. They would adorn the gospel more by a meek, patient, forgiving, humble, contented, cheerful spirit; and they would obtain, more richly, the consolations of God's

Spirit; for those have most spiritual joy, who least give themselves up to carnal delights. He who is continually occupied by worldly cares or amusements, has no leisure to cultivate the joys of divine communion; and he whose heart is overcharged with these things, becomes too much sensualised to be capable of tasting them.

In addition to what has been already said, to shew the importance and necessity of attending to the duty of self-denial, our Lord furnishes us with an argument in the text, of which every one who wishes to save his soul must feel the importance. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Christ alone has salvation. If we do not follow Christ we cannot be saved; for none can save us from our sins but he. We are not called upon to deny ourselves, thereby either to merit, or to gain heaven; but we are called upon to follow Christ, that he may lead us thither, and put us in possession of it. He will lead us, however, in his own way; and when he says, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself;" he does as much as say, that if a man does not deny himself, he does not follow him. Nay, he actually does say that very thing; "he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, cannot be my disciple."

You see, my brethren, that if you do not exercise self-denial, you are no followers of Christ. You may call him Lord, and pretend to follow him; but you might as well let it alone, for there is no following Christ, but in the way of self-denial. What was the path which he himself trod? Was it the way of ease and indulgence, of honour and fame? Was it not the thorny way of tribulation, the way of self-denial and suffering, of reproach and shame? And the servant is not greater than his Lord.

Come, then; come on and follow Christ. Follow him faithfully and fully; and prepare your hearts for what may follow. Wage a determined war against your lusts, against yourselves. And do not think you will be losers by so doing; far from it, you will gain much even now, in the peace and tranquillity of a subdued and well-grounded spirit; and Jesus Christ, under whose banners you war, and by whose Spirit you are made conquerors, will make good to you all his promises; as you have hated your lives for his sake here, you shall find them unto life eternal, in the world to come.

SERMON XXII.

ROMANS, xii. 21.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

FORGIVENESS of injuries is a duty as frequently and as strongly insisted upon as almost any which is commanded in the word of God. And it is very needful, that with respect to this virtue, precept should be upon precept, and line upon line. As long as we live in a world full of selfishness and corruption, injuries will abound. One man will encroach on the rights of another, and his neighbour will resent the encroachment. Hence, there will be continually found both those who will commit wrongs, and those who will reta-

liate on the wrong doer. And thus it is that enmity is fed, injuries are multiplied, the honour of God is wounded, and the Scripture character of mankind verified, "living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

To check the full effect of these fierce dispositions, and prevent the horrible evils which they would produce in Society, civil laws have been framed, which are the ordinance of God, and through his wise dispensation do greatly tend to curb the injurious, and to protect the harmless. Yet, there are injuries to which their influence does not extend; and, in some cases, they lend their aid to the purposes of revenge and wrong. They make no distinction between the man who seeks by their means the recovery of his just right, and the person who avails himself of the letter of the law to gratify his hatred, or to obtain what is not justly his. Injuries, therefore, are not always prevented by human laws. Nay, sometimes the perversion of law promotes that very evil, which its wholesome provisions were intended to restrain.

But besides these imperfect laws, which God has put it into the heart of men to make amongst themselves on earth, he has given to them his own perfect law from heaven. If

this divine rule were universally received, forgiving injuries would cease to be a duty, because injuries themselves would cease. Or if *one part* of mankind fully received it, they would not indeed cease to suffer, but they would cease to revenge. From the perfect law of God, the followers of Christ must seek to know what is their duty in every respect; and in the point before us, viz. how they should behave under injuries and provocations; its directions are numerous, express, and clear.

From this unerring rule of right and wrong, let us endeavour to find out what the line of duty is. We may then see, what sins are committed when men transgress it; and what graces are exercised, when they attend to it. We may further enquire into the benefits which would follow a conscientious observance of the rule; and conclude with a few practical inferences.

I. Then let us endeavour to discover the extent of the duty.

Immediately we see that all manner of revenge is, in the most express and decisive terms, absolutely forbidden. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he

thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? I say not unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven." "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." These expressions, especially the last quoted, appear so very strong, and likely to afford wicked men such a licence to offend with impunity; that it is natural for men to wish to explain them in such a manner as they conceive to be consistent with the welfare of society. But we are so poor judges of what is really best for society; God knows so much better than we, how his own world would be conducted most happily; and we have so little right to set up our own opinions, however plausible, against the word of God; that we should not be too ready to attend to men's reasonings, when they object to the literal interpretation of any part of Scripture, on account of the inconveniencies which they suppose would follow. However, if there are any other portions of Scripture

which seem to allow that men may in some cases maintain their rights and resist evil; this is quite another case. We then must not withhold the permission which these give; nor over-state the duty we are considering, by running away with a single text or set of texts to the neglect of others.

In the books of Moses, many chapters are employed in regulating the redress of grievances, the restitution to be made for violations of property, or the punishment to be inflicted in case of personal injury; "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." But our Lord effectually guards against considering these words as affording any sanction to retaliation, by quoting them, and adding the injunction already cited: "but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil."

As they stand in the law of Moses, they are a direction to the magistrate how he shall act in case of any complaint; and they rather imply, than express, a licence in the offended to prosecute the offender. They *do*, however, imply such a liberty, as we cannot suppose that God would make a provision of which it should be a sin for a man to avail himself. In the same manner when, in the New Testament, the powers that be, are said to be or-

dained of God; and when magistrates are called the ministers of God, avengers to execute wrath on him that doeth evil; this supposes that they who suffer wrong will bring to justice those who do the wrong, else the magistrate would bear the sword in vain.

I will mention only another passage, which throws light on this important question. In his epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul finds fault with them for going to law before the unjust, and not before the saints; not simply for going to law, but for carrying their disputes to the bar of infidels. He thinks it a shame that they cannot find one wise man among themselves to decide a dispute; but that brother should go to law with brother, and that before unbelievers. The inference is, that they might go to law before a judge of their own community. Yet, he considers it as a fault that they should go to law at all. "Why," says he, "do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"

On the whole, then, the doctrine of Scripture, respecting the subject before us, seems to be this: that in all cases revenge is sinful; that no injury can be of such magnitude as to justify retaliation. Forgiveness must be extended to offences, however multiplied; and

love be exercised towards our bitterest enemies. Yet, there is a duty which Christians owe to themselves, and to society. And I wish it to be distinctly understood, that nothing which is said in this discourse is meant to discourage the prosecution of felons. Those who do this are so far from deserving censure, that they merit the thanks of the community. And as bringing offenders to justice is a public duty; so, to defend ourselves agreeably to God's ordinance, is a right which he allows us. But let every man be careful how he exercises that right. If it is a matter of importance to himself and his family, in which he would reluctantly appeal to the laws of his country; his conscience should not be fettered with scruples; let him have recourse to the law; he sins not. But if malice or resentment prompt the suit, he sins. Nay, if he is ready to go to law for every trifle, *though the right be on his side,* yet there is verily a fault in him. Why does he not rather take wrong? Why does he not rather suffer himself to be defrauded?

II. Having thus stated as clearly as I can what the duty is; the importance of attending to it will more fully appear, if we consider, in the second place, the several sins which a man commits when he does not forgive, and the

graces which he exercises when he does. When a man harbours in his breast a sense of injury, he sins against the law of love. Charity is the very queen of Christian graces, the health, the heaven of the soul. As long as a man maintains this temper, he possesses the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Enmity, on the contrary, is the very spirit of the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning. So that he who forgives injuries, loves with Jesus Christ; and he who resents them, hates with Satan. Between forgiving and resenting, there is a difference as wide as between heaven and hell. Indeed this is the *proper* measure of it; for love is the everlasting delight of angels, and hatred the eternal torment of devils.

Again, when a man avenges himself, he manifests every kind of unbelief; but on giving place unto wrath, he exhibits a manifold instance of faith. In avenging himself, a man sees nothing but the instruments of his trouble, and overlooks the counsel of God letting his enemies loose upon him; otherwise he would say as David, concerning Shimei: "Let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." By taking vengeance into his own hands he usurps God's prerogative, who has said, vengeance is mine, I will repay. If men had but faith in God's word, and submission to his authority, this

would be enough for them. It is unbelief and presumption which make men revengeful. In so doing, they distrust the promise and the truth of God; and declare that they dare not commit their cause into his hands. Instead of saying to his adversary, "the Lord judge between me and thee," the aggrieved person will be his own avenger; and is thus guilty of the horrid presumption of putting himself in God's stead, and dealing the thunderbolts of the Almighty. Whereas, he who refrains from avenging, acknowledges the hand of God in his trouble, and is dumb, because it is the Lord's doing. He manifests, in his meek and peaceful carriage, submission to God's will, patience under his hand, subjection to his authority, and confidence in his faithfulness. Thus, while the one dishonours God, the other greatly honours; and God will assuredly appear for him, and hide him in the secret of his presence, from the provoking of all men.

Further, a man by avenging himself, or harbouring resentment in his breast, not only manifests in general a spirit of unbelief; but particularly, he shews an unbelieving forgetfulness of the dying love and meek example of Jesus Christ. "Be kind one to another; tender-hearted, forgiving one another; even

as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," is the evangelical precept. That Christian who will not forgive, has forgotten how much Christ has forgiven him. He acts over again the part of the wicked servant, who, when his Lord had forgiven him five hundred talents, went and took his fellow-servant by the throat for fifty pence. And what does such a one deserve, or what will he get, but to be cast into prison till he shall pay the uttermost farthing? What conformity has the unforgiving professor to the master whom he pretends to follow, the meek and lowly Jesus; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not? Men may talk of knowing Christ, and of believing in him; but *he* gives the best proof both of knowledge and of faith, who copies the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and forgives others as Christ has forgiven him.

From this view which has been taken of the evils that are implied in an unforgiving spirit, and of the graces exercised in the act of forgiveness; it is plain, that he who does not forgive, sins a grievous sin; and that he who habitually forgives, has attained to a considerable measure of grace. The latter part of the proposition will more clearly appear, while we consider,

III. The benefits arising from forgiveness. It has been already mentioned that one objection against interpreting literally our Lord's words: "if any man will sue thee at law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;" is, that such an interpretation would open the door to all manner of injury; and that if men had the prospect of thus being injurious with impunity, the state of society would become intolerable. But there are two considerations which convince me that the event would be exactly otherwise; and that this would be the most likely way in the world to make injuries cease from the earth.

The first consideration is—the reason of the thing. Nothing can be more reasonable than to believe, that the method which God proposes will prove most salutary. He best knows the human heart. He knows what will melt it into kindness, and what will provoke it to fresh acts of injustice. He is the God of peace. He has commanded us to follow peace; and as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men. And forbearing must make part of our system, if we would do so. We know that angry words stir up strife; and when one injury is returned, a fresh one is called for. If a man has done an injury without cause, by bearing it quietly

you give him time to find out his fault, and to be ashamed of it; but the moment you return it, you furnish him with cause for a second, and it will not be easy to convince him that the cause is not a just one. Thus, the very thing which men are apt to think will prevent injuries; is, of all others, most apt to create them. There are many who will contend against obstinate retaliation; but few who do not yield to persevering patience.

The second consideration, therefore, which convinces me that observing our Lord's words in their literal sense, would prevent injuries rather than encourage them, is experience. What is the real fact? Who are the persons in any town or village who have most enemies, and who find every body disposed to contest every thing with them? They are not the peaceable and the patient, but the quarrelsome and the litigious; the men who will put up with no provocation, but will go to law for every shadow of a right. These men live like Ishmaelites among their brethren; their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them. Whereas, when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Thus the welfare of Society is evidently promoted, not by the system of resistance, but by that of forbearance.

We may add, that the benefit to the individual who exercises forgiveness, is exceedingly great; because it furnishes the most satisfactory evidence of genuine faith. Love, as we have already observed, is the temper in which a Christian should live. It is the very first, the queen of graces. But the strength and the purity of this principle is not known till it be tried. Injuries and provocations tend to destroy love; and if they succeed, if the man who is wronged or offended loses his self-possession, departs from the meek spirit of long-suffering charity, and feels resentment and hatred: then he is vanquished. He is overcome of evil. His faith was weak; his strength was small: by enduring, he would have conquered; by resistance, he is overcome. Thus, to revenge injuries, though sometimes considered as a proof of spirit and of courage, is in fact a mark of weakness; for he who does it is a vanquished man.

On the contrary, when a man stands firm in gentleness and patience; when he suffers long and is kind; when no injuries can move him from his resolute charity; he obtains a glorious victory. And what is that victory which thus overcomes evil with good? It is faith working by love. He sees and believes the love of Christ: the love of God shed

abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost sweetens all his soul, and moulds it into the soft and forbearing temper of Jesus Christ. And never is faith more gloriously triumphant, nor more clearly evidenced, than when it rises superior to the malice and the contradiction of men, and turns that into an occasion of charity, which comes as a temptation to hatred.

But further, Christian love, which overcomes injuries by forgiving them, we have seen, springs from faith. The act of forgiveness is not, indeed, the *only* way in which that love is manifested. It leads men also to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to be kind and good in every relation of life. But there is something in this exercise of it which particularly distinguishes it from every thing which unconverted men can do, and sets upon it the mark and stamp of a divine nature. Natural compassion may prompt men to relieve the poor, and natural affection makes men kind to their friends and relations; and therefore, though gracious persons will do these things, yet grace is not hereby discerned; "for if ye love those that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to

them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good; and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil." That love which leads a man to desire the welfare of his enemy, and to pray for it, is truly divine. He who finds the proof of it in himself may give thanks unto God; for this excellent temper is not of man, nor by man, but the work of God's own Spirit in his heart; by which he is made like unto God, and manifestly declared to be of the number of his children.

I will conclude with a short address to those who are ready to do injury; and to those who may happen to be suffering under it.

First, let me tell the sons of violence and wrong, that no character can be further removed from that of God's people than theirs. The children of God are children of peace; and by this they are known to be the sons of God, that they are blameless and harmless. If, then, love is a thing so sacred that it must not be departed from, even to return a wrong received; if, in some cases, it is considered as a fault even to seek redress of injuries by a

legal process: how very far must you be from the kingdom of God, who do wrong without any provocation, and injure those who never offended you! Now, would you not be very sorry if those whom you have injured should both have it in their power, and should be inclined to retaliate; if they should do to you, as you have done to them, and far worse; if they should hurt your reputation, deprive you of your property, and take away the means of revenge? Would you not be keenly mortified, and bitterly grieved, if this should be the case? But this would be the very *best* thing that could happen to you; and the worst would be, if these injured ones should meekly bear their wrongs in uncomplaining patience. Then the Lord God would be with them, as a mighty one and terrible, and he would plead their cause. Beware, then, how you touch one of those little ones, who have so much of the mind of Christ as not to recompense evil for evil. "Better were it for you that a millstone were hanged about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea."

Lastly, let me exhort those who suffer according to the will of God, to commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. Continue only patient in well-doing, and he will take care of

all that concerneth you. Do not be afraid of man; the enemy shall not be able to approach you; the son of wickedness shall not hurt you. Do not you know that the hairs of your head are all numbered, and that he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of your Saviour's eye? Go on, then, patiently and cheerfully in the way of duty, and fret not yourselves, lest you be moved to do evil. It is true, it is very hard to flesh and blood, to be imposed upon or oppressed; and very grievous to see men prosper by such means; many righteous men have been sorely tried by this. But rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not because of him that prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. These things are the trial of faith; they exercise, and they refine it. If your enemies do you evil, do them good; though they curse, yet bless you; and, though they return you hatred for your good-will, yet continue that good-will toward them. It is true, provocations and injuries are grievous to our flesh; but what are *their* offences against *you*, compared with *your* offences against *God?* Let their evil deeds have been ever so numerous, what are the sins of one creature against another, compared with the sins of the creature against God? And though you do *forgive*, is it so

great a matter? Does it cost you so very dear? You may sacrifice a little money, perhaps, for peace and love's sake, and Christ will take it well at your hands. But remember you do not lay down your *lives* for your enemies. Yet this was what Christ did for you: when you were yet ungodly, Christ died for you. Oh, what love is this! Surely, when you reflect on it, you blush at your own little love, which Christ so graciously accepts; and wonder that you can ever harbour a resentful thought. Live only in the constant sense and belief of Christ's love, and you never will; at the sight of that cross and passion, every malicious emotion will die away; and you will drink into the Spirit of him, who cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Of him learn to love, of him learn to forgive; for if you suffer with him, you shall also reign with him. But if, while you call yourselves his disciples, you are impatient of suffering, and resentful of injury; he will not own you at that day, nor deal with you as he does with his loving and believing people. He tells you, even now, what you must expect: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

SERMON XXIII.

LEVITICUS, vi. 13.

The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.

CONSIDERABLE use may be made of the Levitical law, in explaining the doctrine and precept of the gospel. The ceremonies and ritual of the Jewish worship, though abolished, are not void of instruction. When the veil is taken away which hides the glory of these carnal ordinances, we shall see that even in them, Moses and the Prophets wrote concerning Christ and spiritual things.

The subject of the text relates to the altar, on which the morning and evening sacrifices were offered; and to the fire which came down from heaven.

In treating it, I shall,

I. State the particulars recorded, respecting the altar and the fire. And,

II. Infer the Christian instruction to be derived from it.

I. The altar spoken of is the great altar which stood before the door of the sanctuary, on which was offered the daily burnt-offering, morning and evening. The fire with which sacrifices on this altar were consumed, came out from before the Lord; either directly from heaven, or from the visible representation of God's glory, which appeared to the people at the time when this fire was imparted. No sacrifice was to be offered with other fire than this. And when Nadab and Abihu presumed to offer incense to the Lord with strange fire, which he commanded them not, there came out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

This fire, then, being absolutely needful for the sacrifices; the priests, whose charge it was, were to put fresh wood upon it every morning, and to keep it with all diligence. If the fire, through neglect, went out, they could offer no sacrifice till the Lord looked upon the desolate altar, and sent again the fire from heaven. Before the fire was thus sent down from the Lord, we read in the ninth chapter of this

book, that Aaron offered a calf as a sin-offering for himself, and a goat for the people, to make atonement for them. The *atonement* was offered first, and *then* descended the fire from heaven.

II. These are all the particulars which it is needful to mention respecting the altar. In *themselves*, indeed, they are of little concern to us; but *of much* with respect to the spiritual things, whereof they are shadows. Let us humbly endeavour to trace out some of these; in doing which I trust we shall find both correction, and reproof, and instruction in righteousness.

In one point of view our Lord Jesus Christ himself is both altar, sacrifice, and high priest; and the fire with which he was offered, was the fire of divine wrath burning against the sins of the whole world; which sins he took upon himself, and bore in his own body on the tree.

This is the great end of the law. But besides this, Jewish sacrifices also denote those spiritual sacrifices which Christians offer, and which are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. And in this view we must consider our present subject, in order to gain the true spiritual instruction of the text. Thus, the altar will signify the heart; the fire from before the Lord,

the flame of divine love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; the priests, whose business it is to tend this fire, all true believers; and the morning and evening burnt-offerings, the sacrifices of prayer and praise.

But as an offering was *first* made by the high priest, for himself and for the people, to make an atonement, before the fire was sent forth from the Lord; so the flame of divine love is not kindled in the hearts of sinners, till the virtue of the atonement offered by their great High Priest is understood by them, and their iniquity taken away, and their sin purged. And this is the reason why many never do attain to the love of God: because they seek it in a wrong *order*, and expect the Lord to send forth his fire upon the altar before it has been purified by the blood of the atonement. Beware of this error, my brethren; our sacrifices are neither spiritual nor acceptable till they are offered through Jesus Christ. You must first come to him. You must first have your conscience purged from dead works, by faith in his blood; or you must and will remain strangers to the love of God.

The first thing, in ordinary cases, that a sinner apprehends in the progress of his return to God, is his own sinfulness, and the wrath of God against him. He finds his sin

to be hateful. He knows that wrath is already gone out, and feels the plague begun in an evil conscience. What is he to do? Is he to love God, in order that he may be forgiven; or to believe that he is forgiven by free grace, in order that he may love God? The Scriptures say the latter; and we never meet with an instance of a sinner obtaining peace and joy by learning to love God, while yet under the apprehension of his wrath; but we have seen, and do see, men who have been bowed down under the weight of their sins, relieved by believing in the blood of the covenant, finding peace to their souls, and learning to love God because he first loved them.

When the flame of divine love is thus kindled in the heart of a sinner, it resembles in many striking particulars the fire upon the altar; both in its *nature*, and in the rules to be observed respecting it.

It is a fire from heaven. No man hath ever quickened his own soul. It is the direct gift of God himself; the dwelling of his Spirit in the heart. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

As the fire upon the altar burnt up and consumed the beasts offered in sacrifice; so it is the fire of divine love which burns up our carnal lusts, the fleshly part of our nature;

and cleanses and purifies our hearts, not by the washing of water, but by the baptism of fire.

It was the fire upon the altar which caused the smoke and savour of the sacrifice to ascend ; and it is the flame of love which causes our prayers and praises to ascend as a sweet savour unto God.

The fire on the altar was the only fire with which God would suffer his sacrifices to be offered. And the awful example which was made of those who presumed to offer strange fire which God had not commanded, shews the evil of that false worship in which men follow their own feelings and imaginations, instead of being directed by the word, and influenced by the Spirit of God.

I am fully persuaded that many, whom the world would deem enthusiasts, hate enthusiasm with a perfect hatred. Enthusiasm ! why it is the most destructive engine of the devil, introducing into God's sanctuary every extravagant and pernicious device. As the evil is so great, we should be very careful not to charge it upon any persons without good reason : for in so doing, we are not only guilty of uncharitableness, but it may be of ascribing that to the devil which is the work of the Spirit of God.

And, on the other hand, let us beware of the thing itself. Let all our religious affections be brought to the test and standard of Scripture, lest by offering strange fire before the Lord which he has not commanded, there come out against us fire from the Lord, even the vengeance of that eternal fire which shall devour the adversaries.

The fire kindled upon the altar from above was to be kept perpetually burning, and was never to go out. And it was the office of the priests to see to this; to feed it with fresh fuel every morning, and to guard the holy flame with all their care. The sacrifices were not continually offering: the stated daily sacrifices were only morning and evening; yet the fire was to be always burning, ready for any occasional sacrifice, whether it were a trespass-offering, or a peace-offering, or a free-will offering, which any one might bring. And herein is a very principal point of resemblance, and the chief instruction of the text.

Christians are not continually engaged in the actual service of prayer and praise. They also have their stated seasons of more solemn devotion morning and evening, when their prayer is set forth before God as the incense, and the lifting up of their hands is an evening sacrifice. During other parts of the day

they are labouring with their hands, and engaged in the business of life like other men. But still, though tradesmen or labourers, they are also priests, and have the charge of the sanctuary, and are to guard the holy fire. Though they are not always praying, yet the fire is never to go out. Their chief work is to keep themselves in the love of God, so that their hearts may be in the frame for sacrificing all the day long; and may on every occasion through the day be sending up some tribute of praise and thanksgiving.

And this is a point on which the comfort of believers, and their honouring God in the world, very materially depend. Many, from being slothful and unwatchful, lose all the joy of religion. They have a name to live, they understand and prefer sound doctrine; but feel so little the powers of the word, and so little live in the Spirit of it, that their comfort is chiefly borrowed from the world.

And it would be well if their own loss of comfort were the only evil: but, alas! the cause and honour of God suffer by them. He is continually doing good, and loading us with benefits. And his professing people, who are as it were his priests, ought to give him thanks and praise, and so to order their conversation as to honour him, and lead others

also to glorify him. But, instead of this, they keep silence from good words; and speak not, because the fire burns not within them.

Nor is this all. The lamentable defect discovers itself most in their closets. When they would attend to their private devotions, they have but the form of prayer to offer. The altar is cold. They have brought their sacrifice, but there is no holy flame to make the savour of it to ascend. A most awful and dangerous state, the frequent fore-runner of a total departure from God!

The matter being so important, it will be useful to offer some rules for preserving, unextinguished, the flame of divine love.

In the first place, take care that you suffer it not to become languid. To prevent the last extremity of any evil, the best expedient is to guard against the beginnings. The way both of comfort and safety in religion, is to have a great deal of it. When a fire is strong, a little fuel added, and a very little care, will keep it burning; but when it is ready to go out, the management of it is very difficult. The fuel which is added may choak it; the stirring may put it out. Just so it is with the fire of divine love. When it is vigorous and lively, and men are fervent in spirit, the flame is strengthened and increased by every ordi-

nance; by reading, by hearing, by meditation, by converse. Then a word goes a great way; and if it be but the word of truth, however homely, it is welcome and profitable. On the contrary, when men are low in grace, and cold in love, the greatest care is required to recover and restore them. Even the word itself profits them little. They grow fastidious too, and are easily offended. Thus it was with the Galatians; they had become captious, because their love had waxed cold; and Paul reminds them of the former days, in which, while their love was fervent, they found such a blessedness in the sound of the gospel, that they regarded not the infirmity with which he had preached to them; but received him as a messenger from heaven, as an angel of God. Guard, then, against the very first symptoms of decline. If you have discovered any, be watchful, and do your first works; and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die, lest he fight against you with the sword of his mouth.

A second direction needful to be observed is, to beware of those scenes and temptations which are dangerous to the love of God. Who, that wished to preserve a fire, would suffer water to be thrown upon it till it was well nigh extinguished? Beware of worldly cares, and

fleshly lusts, and unholy tempers; either the fire of divine love will burn up *them*, or they will drown *it*. Take heed how you admit these dangerous waters into your soul. Quench not, O, quench not the Spirit! Flee worldly lusts, and vanities, and cares, and evil communications; put away all malice, and envy, and evil-speaking; and follow after truth, righteousness, meekness, temperance. By watchfulness also, and prayer, feed the holy flame; that it may burn up every earthly, every selfish, every inordinate passion; and that your souls may be filled with divine and heavenly love.

Lastly, remember the sad consequences of letting the fire go out. If an ordinary fire dies, a new spark may be struck, and it may be kindled again; but if this fire goes out, God only can re-kindle it. Nor can you tell how many long and tedious nights you may pass, without the enlivening flame and comfortable warmth of God's love.

The prophet Hosea foretold, concerning the children of Israel, that they should abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice. This desolate state of those who were once the Israel of God, exhibits well the condition of many, who were once joyful and fruitful Christians, but have

fallen from their first-love; whose hearts, now joyless, cold, and barren, are like an altar deserted of the heavenly flame on which no sacrifice can be offered.

O, then, you who possess the sacred fire, and feel the love of God, guard the precious gift with all your care. Take heed that you quench not the Spirit by vain thoughts, idle words, fleshly lusts, or covetous desires. Beware of every idol which may steal the inestimable jewel from you. Stir up the gift that is in you by prayer, by reading the word, and by Christian communion: and thus give diligence to "keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

In general, I have hitherto addressed myself to such as have, or who believe they have, the love of God in them. Before I conclude, I would address two other descriptions of persons; and, first, those who doubt what is their state in this respect.

No question can be more important than that, concerning which you are in suspense. When you enquire concerning the health of your body, the case is not a little interesting; and the answer in no slight degree affects your comfort. But when the enquiry is whether or no you have the love of God in you: it is

more than health, more than life; it is whether or no you resemble in character the family in heaven, or the damned in hell. Deal, then, fairly with yourselves, and enquire diligently. And be careful that you do not adopt wrong rules of judging. Not to perplex you with many, I will give you one Do you keep the commandments of God? Does every thing give way to the call of duty? And are you careful to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man? If this is not the case, the affections which you feel towards God are not the genuine love of him. If you have not even attained to the fear of God, much less have you learned to love him. If you are not watchful, humble, dutiful, obedient; your joys and comforts are not the fire from heaven, but strange fire which the Lord has not commanded. You ought rather to mourn, and be humbled, and walk softly.

If, on the other hand, conscience does bear you witness that you are humbly walking with God, and making it the business of your life to serve him; then your love is genuine. You may be very much disposed to question it, and to look only at the coldness of your affection, and at your unprofitableness; yet, truly you do love God. It is your duty not to refuse comfort; and it will also be your wisdom, instead

of discouraging yourselves by looking continually at the smallness of your love to God, to turn your eye to the greatness of God's love to you. Your love is faint and cold, you say; be it so; will it grow stronger and warmer by your looking at it? No; look at the fountain, the ocean of love. Look to that sun, whose beams are mercy and grace, and his course joy and righteousness. Bask in his rays, and you will grow warm by his heat. It is this which makes Christians so cold, heartless, and tongue-tied; they look at Christ so little, and exercise faith in him so faintly. It is thy little faith, O man! which gives thee so much cause to deplore thy little love. Why not say boldly, however unprofitable and unworthy I am, his grace is sufficient for me? Yes; I will throw myself at the foot of his cross, and there will I venture my eternal all! Wouldst thou but thus believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God, and find the gospel of Christ to be the power of God unto salvation.

In concluding, I would address a few words to those whose hearts testify that they have not the love of God.

You see the way in which you may have that essential want remedied, even by believing in Jesus. But then, alas! you have no more heart to believe than to love. You not

only have not the love of God, but you do not want to have it. You do not mourn the hardness and insensibility of your hearts. Therefore words of encouragement to you who are at ease already; are, it is to be feared, of little avail. If words of terror will do better, surely your situation suggests a thought which is as true as it is awful. You must, you must, sooner or later, burn with a perpetual fire; either you must burn with the sacred fire of God's love now, or with the everlasting fire of his wrath hereafter.

Either by delighting yourselves in the Lord, and by holding communion with him, you are preparing for the services and the joys of glorified saints in heaven; or by distance from God, and enmity against him, for the society of lost spirits in hell.

For as there is no middle place between heaven and hell in the next life; so there is no middle character between those who love God, and those who hate him in this. You think you are not so wicked as to hate God; but if you have not learned to love him, this is your character: for the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be.

In your want of subjection to his law, in in your neglect of his commandments, and in

your backwardness to all exercises of prayer and praise, see the proof of your enmity. And remember for what place this enmity is fitting you. A day is coming, when all the enemies of the Lord shall be found liars, and filled with everlasting confusion. They will then see how great the terrors of the Lord are. The fire of his wrath, when once kindled, will be ever burning; it will never go out.

SERMON XXIV.

PROVERBS, XXVII. 1.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

THE importance of this caution is peculiarly evident in the present times. We have witnessed great and unexpected changes; and both the state of public affairs, and the concerns of individuals, prove the vanity of human expectations. It may be profitable to dwell a little upon the humbling lesson; and to check those sanguine imaginations, which prospects of future good are apt to excite.

We desire not, however, to rob ourselves of any innocent source of comfort. As long as our expectations are confined within

due bounds; as long as they are limited by reason, experience, and the word of God; and suited to the condition of man upon earth, as a dependent creature living in an uncertain world; the admonition in the text does not interfere with the joy which they may occasion. For, as the apprehension of approaching evil is a reasonable ground of consideration, so the prospect of approaching good is a reasonable ground of rejoicing. But in both cases, the uncertainty of future events is to be kept in mind. We must neither sorrow on account of a threatened evil, as if it had actually overtaken us; nor exult in an expected good, as if we had actually attained it. The hour of suffering may be brought very near, and yet may pass from us; and the cup of joy may be dashed out of our hands, when we are in the act of putting it to our lips. Is it not seasonable, then, to whisper to the too sanguine spirit, whose eager desire is grasping at pleasure which he may never taste, and neglecting duties which most nearly concern him: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth?"

Besides, this passage is so comprehensive; expresses so much in little compass; is so adapted, not only to particular emergencies,

but to the general condition of man on earth; the spirit which it guards against is so evil in itself, and so unsuited to the circumstances of dependent creatures; and that which it inculcates, so agreeable to the nature of things, and so becoming the real situation and acknowledged frailty of man; it speaks a truth so important, and so adapted to every age and condition of life; it is capable of being applied to so many occasions; is of such ready use, and such constant necessity: that our time cannot be misemployed in considering it.

Grant me, therefore, I pray you, my friends, your patient attention; while I first briefly open the general subject, and then illustrate the importance of it, by applying it to a few particulars in which we are most nearly concerned.

I. The great object of the text is to repress the independent spirit of man. There is nothing more natural to our fallen race than this. This it is which spoils our rejoicing, whether in present or expected advantages. It is this which makes it so necessary for the Lord to blast our prospects, to wither our gourds; and by disappointment, and experience of vanity, vexation, and sorrow, to keep us low, and make us sensible of our dependence on himself. This evil of an indepen-

dent spirit springs from the root of unbelief; and as it is, in fact, a departure from the living God, it is a sin of the first magnitude; though often the occasions on which it is manifested are seemingly trivial, and the conduct which it produces, not flagrantly bad.

In nothing do our corrupt hearts more need to be watched, than in this evil-boasting. It is a subtle, decent, unsuspected sin. It is like those graves which appear not; and men go over them and are defiled. Therefore, both the Old and New Testaments are very full in condemning this sin. The book of Deuteronomy abounds with protestations against it. And St. James has, if I may so speak, a short sermon on the very text which has been read to you; where he says, "Go to, ye that say to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings, all such rejoicing is evil."

And as such rejoicing or boasting is evil in itself, so it leads to other evils of the greatest magnitude. It leads men in general to put

off repentance to a more convenient season; it causes even good men to be remiss in duty; and seduces them to set up their rest here, instead of seeking it above.

II. Having thus opened the meaning, and expressed what I conceive to be the spirit of the text; I shall proceed to apply it to several particulars, in which it may prove a most useful caution.

1. The counsel of the text is most valuable, with respect to the great work of conversion.

There is an important change necessary for all men, in order to salvation. Our Lord himself has said, "ye must be born again;" and that "unless a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Men are, therefore, every where exhorted to repent and be converted, that their sins may be blotted out. Yet, though a converted state is in every respect unspeakably preferable to an unconverted one, being a state of pardon, favour, and life; while an unconverted state is a state of condemnation and death: yet men are always unwilling to experience the change. They dread conversion, though it is the door of life; and shun repentance, as if it was to put an end to all their joys, whereas it is the very thing which is to introduce them to joy.

They do not, however, in general, manifest this unwillingness by saying, they will not repent, or by inwardly purposing to remain as they are; but they boast themselves of to-morrow. There are hinderances at present, which forbid them from attending to this great concern. These must first be disposed of, and a more favourable opportunity obtained, and then they will repent. This procrastination it is, which ruins thousands of souls. If the question was, "now or never," they would, though unwillingly, say—now. But as they do not mean to give up the point, they venture on a delay, which in numberless cases proves, alas, fatal! The promised time either comes not at all; or, if it is given them, finds them no better disposed for the great work of turning to God with all their hearts.

In no case can the admonition, "boast not thyself of to-morrow," be more important than in this. In no case, can men with greater force and propriety be urged to make haste and delay not the time. For, even if they were certain of the morrow; if they were certain of days, nay of years to come; still, to live under the displeasure of God, with sin unpardoned, and a heart unsanctified; to be at enmity with the best of beings, and abhorred of him, is so wretched and dreadful a state;

while, on the contrary, to be reconciled to God, to live with him on terms of peace and favour, to love him, and to be loved of him, and to possess something of his image and likeness, is so happy and desirable a condition; that one would think not a day should be lost by any reasonable man; but that every one, though he had thousands of days certain before him, would seize the first of them to pass from death unto life; that no one in his right mind would abide in death a single day, after life has been offered him.

But how much more urgent is the case, when we know that the morrow may not be granted. We may say to all who have hitherto lived at a distance from God: this day is salvation offered you; forgiveness of sins is preached to you, through Jesus Christ; believe in him and you shall be saved; your iniquities shall be pardoned; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. You, who are by nature children of wrath, and enemies to God by wicked works, may this very day become children of God and heirs of heaven. But now, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. Another day, death may have closed the scene for ever; opportunity may be for ever lost; your

state may then be everlastingly confirmed, children of wrath, and heirs of eternal woe. And in such a case, will men boast of the morrow, and talk of what they will do on a day which they may never see? Is it not seasonable to remind them? You know not what a day may bring forth. A day may extinguish the breath of life in your nostrils, and shut up your souls in hell. To-day then, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.

2. Men are to be admonished not to boast of to-morrow, with respect to the discharge of duty.

This is an admonition which may be properly pressed upon those who have repented of their former sins, and are turned unto God through Jesus Christ. For even in the regenerate, there remain the roots of their former evils. There are many duties which are displeasing to flesh and blood; and these they would gladly decline; and the deceitful heart suggests to them, also, the same expedient, not absolutely to refuse, but to defer them; to find out some plausible reason, why they should be excused for the present; and to promise themselves a more vigorous and faithful discharge of self-denying duties, under more favourable circumstances. Alas! the fault is not in the circumstances, but in the deceitful-

ness of the heart. Fleshly lusts will always plead that they may be suffered to remain unmortified: and if we hear their plea, we do it, as Saul spared Agag, to our own cost. We keep alive those enemies which will not fail to war against our souls. No change of time will ever make a difference in these things. Evil propensities will never be overcome with ease and pleasure; nor duties which are disagreeable be gladly taken up. Those evil propensities must already have ceased to exist before this can be the case. In mortifying and overcoming them, violence must be used to our darling inclinations. Delay does no good. It does harm; it weakens exertion; it confirms bad habits; it accustoms a man to yield. Whereas by vigorous effort in the power of Christ, not only is success obtained, but strength acquired. The enemy is weakened; its attacks become more feeble; duty becomes more easy; and, when the victory is fully atchieved, what was painful becomes delightful. Thus, in the prompt exercise of self-denying duty, is the Christian to fight against sin; to purge himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Besides, not only are after-opportunities to be little depended upon, if present ones

are neglected; but here also it is to be remembered, that they may never come. Deferring is boasting of to-morrow. It is taking for granted, that life will be prolonged, faculties continued, occasions afforded, means supplied; but how commonly is one or other of these wanting; nay, how often are they all withdrawn? It is surely too much to expect that they should all meet again and again; so that the opportunity of doing good, which a man at present through sloth neglects, should be presented to him repeatedly in the same perfection. You intend to relieve a distressed object another day; that other day comes, but the object of your intended compassion is removed to another world. It is endless to particularize cases; they are innumerable. True Christian wisdom is to consider our time, and all our faculties as so many talents committed to us; not to be boasting of the morrow, but using well the present moment; to improve each day, as it is given, to the glory of God, and to wait his will for the next. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Now is the time to mortify sin, to overcome the world, to fight the good fight of faith, to do good, to serve your generation, to

glorify God, to obtain a meetness for heaven, and to lay hold on eternal life.

3. The rule of the text may serve to regulate our affections with respect to this world and the next.

"Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." What a mark of vanity does this one consideration stamp on all earthly acquisitions and enjoyments! A man has purchased an estate, has built his mansion, has furnished his apartments, has laid in his choice wines; every thing adapted to splendour, ease, and indulgence, is prepared; and he is just beginning to say to his soul; "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" when, lo! the hand of death is already upon him; and while he is indulging the vain dream of worldly happiness for years to come, his soul is required. The flesh is heir to so many ills, so many accidents surround us, and we are vulnerable in so many parts, that it seems like madness to be expecting a permanent felicity composed of such frail and perishing materials; it is like building a house of sand, and expecting the sliding structure to stand firm. How vainly does the worldling boast himself of his goods, and strengthen

himself in the multitude of his riches! Poor precarious possession! Weak, and insufficient protection! which profits not in the day of wrath, which cannot arrest the pains of sickness, nor deliver from the hand of death!

Presume not, then, on the morrow; do not live in the world as if sure of continuing in it; nor set your affections on the things below, as if they were substantial and secure. Remember that the fashion of the world passeth away; rejoice, therefore, as if you rejoiced not; and buy, as though you possessed not; and use this world, as not abusing it.

Yet, despond not of the morrow. The right Christian spirit is as remote from despondency as from presumption. The true believer has learnt here the golden mean. Knowing the uncertainty of life, he reckons not on those things which he may never have, nor does he fasten himself to the world, and give it a greater hold on his affections, by the promise of distant advantages and enjoyments. But he is too wise to torment himself with the apprehension of evil which may never come. He brings not into the present day, ills which are not its own. He remembers the words of his Master; "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." He accepts the burden of the day, or rather casts it upon the Lord who has

promised to sustain him, and waits in faith and prayer for the moment of deliverance.

At the same time, though you must neither presume on the morrow, nor despond of the morrow, you must have a provident thought for the morrow. Thus far to reckon on the morrow, as a time which may surely be expected to come, is not presumption; and to take this provident care, is not unbelief.

One thing which makes Christian duty a nice and difficult thing is, that it pushes nothing to extremes. It is not enough for a man to go impetuously on in defiance of opposition; but he must also see, that this very impetuosity does not push him into a fault on the contrary side. He is not to boast of the morrow, not to presume upon it, not to lay his plans and form his schemes, as if times and circumstances were at his disposal—True; yet in almost every action of his life, he must have respect to days, and even years to come. He knows, indeed, they may not come; and submits to the will of God, how many days he may be allowed to see. But as in the common course of things, day comes after day; it is the business of one day to provide for others. Thus, he prepares his ground, and sows his grain, though he knows that what he has sown

another may reap. What he has done, is *duty*; the *event* is left with God.

So again, he must seize present opportunities, and not reckon on others which may never be afforded. Nevertheless, there are many things which he may wish to accomplish, yet cannot do till the proper season arrives. He must wait till the desired occasion presents itself, and the necessary means are put in his power. Here it is his duty *to be still*, and to look for a better and more advantageous moment of action hereafter. And this is not *boasting of the morrow*, but *waiting God's time.*

By this nice balancing of contrary qualities, genuine Christian principle may be discovered. A restless disposition may make one man ever busy in season, and out of season; and sloth or despondency may cause another to neglect the proper time of acting. But Christian principle is neither timorous nor presumptuous. It does not lose in debating the time of action; nor rush on to inconsiderate enterprise without the proper means of success. It will go through evil report, and good report in the way of duty; but yet, will consider well the means employed, and provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Further, as we know not what shall be on

the morrow, it not only becomes us to take a provident care for it, without presumption or unbelief; without boasting on the one hand, or desponding on the other: but moreover to look beyond it, and all our changing and uncertain days below, to a better and more abiding condition. If the morrow is uncertain, and if that uncertain morrow, when it arrives, is to be followed only by days as uncertain as itself; it becomes us to enquire—'Is this all that man has to expect? Is he to continue in this uncertainty for a transient life, and close the vain scene in the darkness and silence of the grave? Is there no better thing provided for him, no more perfect state in reserve?'

Thus, the vanity and uncertainty of the things that are seen, should lead our minds to the things that are not seen; and teach us to walk by faith, and not by sight. Happy are all they who are possessed of this gracious principle. If, my brethren, you have indeed fled for refuge to the hope that is set before you in Christ Jesus; if you have believed in him with the whole heart; he is gone to prepare a place for you, where you shall know changes no more. Where there will be no setting suns, no uncertain morrows, but an eternal and unclouded day! And while you wait for this blessed time and place, learn to

make your happiness here run in the same channel; in knowing, serving, and loving your Redeemer. This is the bliss of heaven. For this you are training. Learn the lesson now; acquire the heavenly art. These are the things which are out of fortune's reach, which change not with a changing world. Follow after these blessings, and though other things cannot cease to be of importance to you, yet commit them and yourselves into the hands of your Saviour, and your mind will be at rest; your goings will be established; and you will walk on the uncertain waters as on solid ground; till at length, when your days are accomplished, you sleep in him, and bid farewell to vanity and uncertainty for ever!

But these consolations belong not to you who know not Christ as your Saviour; or who merely call him so from custom and education, without having known any thing of his saving power. You have your portion in this life. A most precarious portion! Though surrounded at present with comforts, and in the midst of prosperity, this may be the last comfortable day you shall know. Another day may bring with it events which shall cause all your joys to wither, and your prospects of earthly good to vanish. You say this is unlikely. I grant it; all I urge is that it may

be, and that therefore you should seek that good part which cannot be taken away from you.

Repent and be converted. Seek the forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ; seek the peace of God, and his favour, and the hope of glory. When you know Christ as yours, and in him *eternal life* as yours; then, and not till then, you will taste something of true happiness—a happiness which will bring along with it the satisfying assurance, that it is what the world can neither give nor take away.

SERMON XXV.

PROVERBS, xiv. 30.

A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

OF all vicious passions, there are none which it is more easy to represent in an odious light than envy. That a man should repine at the successes of another when they do him no harm, or rejoice at the misfortunes of another when they do him no good, is hating without a cause. To find matter of grief in all that is joyous, and to derive a dark joy from what is miserable, is so perverse and unnatural an affection, that it seems scarcely possible to be harboured in the mind of man.

There is no difficulty in shewing the hateful character of this vice; the misfortune is, that

no one will acknowledge it to be his own. And if it be thus generally disavowed *with truth*, we in vain declaim against a fault which does not exist. Where there is no disease, there needs no cure. Nevertheless, experience and Scripture both concur in teaching us, that however willing each man may be to except himself, the vice in question is very prevalent. Indeed, if we submit to the Scripture account, we must believe that every heart is under its influence, till made really sound by true conversion. "Do ye think," says the apostle, "that the Scripture saith in vain, the spirit which is in us lusteth unto envy."

If we trace its operation as exhibited in the sacred volume, we shall find that the very first sin on record, after the fall, took its rise from this passion. Cain was filled with wrath, and his countenance fell; not because Abel had injured or insulted him; but because the offering of that righteous man was accepted, while his own was rejected. Again, the Patriarchs moved with envy, sold their brother into Egypt. And when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, Joshua, who was jealous for the honour of his master, could not endure to see others possessing the same endowment, and desired Moses to forbid them. This was, indeed, in some respect, a generous emotion;

it was not his own pre-eminence for which he was concerned, but that of his master; yet it shewed that he was too much alive to human distinction. He did not see sufficiently, that gifts, whether of prophecy or of tongues, are little things compared with the glory of God. A servant of the Lord should value such talents, not as possessed by this or that man, but as tending to glorify God. Joshua, in this case, acted rather as the minister of Moses, than of Jehovah: he fell into the fault of "glorying in men," and "being puffed up for one against another." He not only desired that Moses should have honour, but that he should have *exclusive* honour. And the answer of that meek saint shews to what spirit he attributed this officious request: "enviest thou for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them."

If from Scripture we consult experience, how soon does this spirit discover itself in children! Who has not seen a child moved even to tears for vexation, on account of some indulgence shewn to another? The child was sufficiently happy, till his companion became more happy in his estimation. Parents! observe carefully the dispositions of your children; shew them the evil of such tempers, and

endeavour to overcome them before they gain strength by age and habit. For as we go on, we see the same spirit manifested in older persons. The object is changed, the affection is the same. Young persons who are fond of dress, are nearly as much mortified by the splendour of another, as pleased with their own. And when money begins to get hold of the affections, how commonly are men dissatisfied with their own profits, only because the profit of another in the same line of business is greater. They were contented with what they had, till they saw another obtain more. You may say, indeed, this is only natural self-love. It is, indeed, self-love; and it is also natural; but it is envy, strictly speaking, envy; for it is pained at the advantage of another, and would be relieved, if that advantage were withdrawn. To add only one example more: reputation is one of our idols; and can men bear to witness a reputation rising high? Are they not ready with some insinuation by which they may pull down the approved character, and reduce him to their own level?

I have brought forward only such proofs of the prevalence of this passion as seem most indisputable. One reason why so few people think that they themselves are under its influence is, that they draw an extravagant

picture of it; and because they are not the monsters which they feign, suppose therefore, that they are not envious. It is thus that men do in some other cases. The Scriptures say much against covetousness, and bid us beware of it. How then do men put from themselves these cautions and reproofs? Why, they paint to themselves a miser, a prodigy of avarice, which seldom or never appears; and because they are not this miser, they conclude that they are not those covetous persons who are condemned in Scripture. Just so it is respecting envy; men form an imaginary character, a creature void of every kind or benevolent feeling; rejoicing only in the calamities of mankind, and weeping only in their successes; they are sure that this is not their own picture; and, therefore, the subtle workings of envy are not observed. It will be proper, then, that the vice be represented in its true light, that the due conviction may be produced, and the method of cure attended to.

I will endeavour, therefore, to state,

I. The nature,

II. The cure, of envy.

I. The feeling of envy does not arise from pure malice. It is not direct enmity which is gratified or disappointed, as when a man is pleased at the evil, or mortified at the good

which befals one who has injured him. But the root of it is, inordinate love of worldly things. I take the word in its largest signification; the love of present temporal things of whatever kind, whether sensual gratifications, appearance, money, or reputation. It is evident that, as there are degrees of all these; the same person, the same man or woman, will be rich or poor, respectable or inconsiderable, comely or ill-favoured, according as those with whom he or she is compared, possess more or less of the desired advantages. This being the case, as long as these things are unduly valued, the man who so values them, will be pained by seeing others possess them in greater measure, because he will himself thereby sink lower in the scale.

And this accounts for a discrimination which the passion of envy makes in the objects on which it fixes. Men envy more, those who are only a little above them, than those who are very much higher; those of their own age or profession, more than those of another, though a more eligible one. For as we more regret an advantage which we have been near attaining, than one which never came within our reach; so when those rise above us who were once below, or only equal to us, we feel more envy, than we do at the advancement of

persons who always moved in a higher sphere, and never called our passions into exercise.

That this is a true account of the origin of envy, appears from the testimony of Scripture. "Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not of your lusts which war in your members?" And again, "Do ye think the Scripture saith in vain, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" To these I may add a remarkable passage from the forty-ninth psalm: "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him." In this argument the Psalmist seems rather to soothe, than to rebuke the envious emotion. He seems to say, 'be comforted, though this man be made rich now, in a little time he shall be as poor as you can desire.' We should rather have expected him to say, 'what though he be made rich, is his gain your loss? Cannot you enjoy what God has given you, without repining that he has given more to others?' So we should have expected the spirit of envy to be rebuked; and so it might have been rebuked, had envy sprung from pure malice; but arising as it does from lust, i. e. from inordinate desire of present things, the seemingly

soothing argument which is used in the psalm, strikes at its very root; it shews the vanity of those things on which desire is fixed, and proves that they are not worth envy. As long as these things are supremely loved, there will be envy on account of them. If we would heal the disease thoroughly, we must remove the cause of it. The language of the psalm, therefore, both explains the origin of envy, and suggests its cure. And this we will in the second place proceed to consider.

II. The true cure of envy is expressed in one word, in the beginning of the text, "a sound heart." Envy can not be cured alone. It can not singly be taken out of a corrupt heart, and the other vices left in possession. As long as the heart remains unsound, envy, with the vices which produce it, and which spring from it, will be sure to be found there. The only effectual cure is the renewal of the heart; that by the operation of the Holy Spirit, that healthful frame of mind be produced, which is contrary to all envyings. This soundness of heart, as it stands opposed to envy, consists in three things: the first of which is,

A conviction of the vanity of all worldly advantages.

This, as far as envy is concerned, must be considered as the main branch of a sound mind.

For as an inordinate desire of worldly things is the grand source of envy; so a contempt and disregard of them must be its principal cure. And here there is no occasion for any extravagant running down of worldly advantages. Let it be allowed, that education, talents, accomplishments, health, riches, reputation, may in a very considerable degree contribute to the comfort of life. Yet what is this life in the existence of an immortal being? And what is any thing which serves to grace, adorn, or enliven this short scene, if it can do nothing more, if it pass not into eternity?

Men are envious one of another, because they look at the things which are seen, and forget the things which are not seen. Are riches, or honour, or personal advantages, in possession of a good man? And do you think him eviable for these? Believe me, he is far more enviable for those things which you see not: for his humility, his faith, his love of the brethren, and his hope of heaven. If you must envy, envy him for these things; covet earnestly the best gifts, and you will cease to desire these meaner things, or to envy those who possess them. Or are the above-mentioned advantages in the possession of a wicked man? And do you envy him for them? Do

you think *his* a goodly portion, who, when he has rejoiced in it for a little time, must lie down in everlasting sorrow? View these things in the light of eternity; and instead of fretting yourselves because of the ungodly, and being envious of evil-doers, you will rather pity them, when you consider how soon "they shall be cut down as a flower, and be withered as the green herb." O, the balance of the sanctuary! What a just estimate does it afford of worldly good or evil, and what an effectual cure does it provide for envy! Even David, when he forgot this sacred measure of good and evil, was betrayed into this sin. He was envious at the foolish, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, till he went into the sanctuary of God: his judgment was then rectified; his envy cured. He saw the end of these men; he understood how God set them in slippery places, and cast them down to destruction. O, how humbled was he for his brutish insensibility in envying such characters, when he perceived how suddenly they consumed, perished, and came to a fearful end!

This is the most direct remedy for the checking of envy; a just estimate of worldly things; a due conviction of the vanity of time, and of

the importance of eternity. There remain two others which have no small influence to the same end.

The fear of God.

" Let not thine heart envy sinners ; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Thus we see, that to be in the fear of the Lord is, in the judgment of Solomon, a true way of overcoming envy. Envy and the lively fear of the Lord cannot consist together. There is in envy a sort of dissatisfaction with our own state, and a murmuring at the dealings of God with ourselves and others, which is inconsistent with the fear of him. A man who fears God will learn to suppress the risings of envy by considerations such as these: ' Is my lot appointed by chance? Or those things which befal my neighbour, are they without the Lord? Has not God appointed both my station and his? And shall I complain that his is better than mine? Instead of fulfilling the task assigned me, shall I find fault with it, and say that I could have chosen more wisely what rank, office, talents, or substance, should be entrusted to my care? O, the impiety of a haughty worm rebelling against God! Shall man be wiser than his Maker? Besides, who am I, a sinful worm, that I should think better things my due, than those which God has

given me? If he has given others better than me, he has given me better than I deserve. Let me, then, esteem myself unworthy of the least of his mercies; and, instead of repining at what he withholds from me, or gives to others; let me refrain my soul, and keep it low, even as a child that is weaned from his mother; yea, let my soul be as a weaned child. What he appoints let me humbly accept as that which is best for me, and far better than my desert.' This is the language of true humility, and fear of the Lord. Every one must see how powerfully it must counteract the proud and rebellious workings of envy.

The last particular belonging to a sound heart, which I shall mention as contrary to envy is—a sense of the love of God in Christ.

It was by this that Saint Paul tells us he was cured of these hateful passions. "We ourselves also," he says, "were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived; serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and *envy*; hateful, and hating one another; but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." This is the true way of mortifying

every kind of sin: the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, *destroys* all *impure* loves, and *transcends* all *inferior* loves. Oh! taste and see that the Lord is gracious; and you will have a portion which others may envy, but which will leave you no cause to envy others. It is for the miserable to envy. When your religion makes you happy, it will lift you above envy. I remember hearing an eminent Divine, now no more, say, that no evil passion could be starved out of the heart. Some better passion must dispossess it, and occupy its place. This is eminently true of the passion we are considering: we cannot think, or reason, or resolve it away; but let our hearts be warmed and sweetened by love, and we shall be borne above it.

Before I conclude, I will add a brief address to three descriptions of persons,

1. Careless persons: you perhaps do not see your own real character. There are some good qualities you possess. You look at these; and because of them, give yourselves credit that your hearts are good. But if the world is still in possession of your affections; if the fear of God is not in you, and if you do not know the love of God in Christ, depend upon it your hearts are the prey of a variety of evil

passions, which make you miserable, although being wholly taken up with the *object* of your desire, resentment, or envy, you do not look inward, nor reflect on the passion itself, which is the real cause of your misery. You feel the vexation: you blame times and circumstances, but forget to blame the wrong state of your own heart, which is in fact the only thing to be blamed. If this were right, all would be right.

In the mean time, while you are thinking well of yourselves, supposing your hearts to be good, the unsoundness is discovered by others in your words and actions. They see that envy possesses your soul, when they perceive that you are ready to decry the merit of a rival; or by a faint praise, feebly endeavouring to disguise your real emotions. Oh! think how you will appear in that day when you shall be stripped of all your seeming virtues; when the unsoundness of your hearts shall be made manifest, and the rottenness of your most splendid performances discovered! Search your own spirits, now while there is time; lest you know yourselves too late, when the day of grace is passed, and when he that is filthy must be filthy still!

2. You who are convinced of the depravity of your hearts, are humbled at the sight, you

abhor yourselves. You are apt to think that none are so bad as you; but your fruits shew that the fact is otherwise. You hate that selfishness which you feel within, and think that surely other people have it not; yet none so ready for every good work as you; none so ready to deny self, and to endure labour and expense for the good of others. You mourn the spirit of envy. Oh! how you loathe yourselves, when you feel its hateful workings! Yet you are most careful not to indulge a propensity to detraction; no one suffers either in his credit or interest from you, because he is rising above you. Now all this is, because you know your own hearts. Others suspect not the evil; and therefore it prevails, and influences their actions often, and still more often their tongues. You are in the way of cure; your very watchfulness and self-distrust are symptoms of recovery. I want not to lessen your abhorrence of any evil emotion; see it to be hateful; yet remember that the grace of Christ is sufficient for you. No sin can be too great to be forgiven; no iniquity too strong to be purged away by his precious blood and powerful grace. Cast yourselves on him, and he will forgive all your sins, and heal all your infirmities.

3. I would say to those whose hearts are

purified by faith, be thankful that God has given you that good part which shall never be taken away from you. Rejoice in this your portion. Would you exchange conditions with the most prosperous of unconverted men? No; surely you do not envy, but pity them. Go on from strength to strength. Do not think it enough to get above tormenting envy, but enter into all the heaven of love. Rest not till it be your very nature to "rejoice with those that do rejoice, and to weep with those that weep." As new-born babes, lay aside all malice, and envyings, and evil-speakings; and put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Thus being kindly affectioned in brotherly love, suffering with every suffering member, and rejoicing with every member which is honoured, you will prove that you are, indeed, of the body of Christ, and have received of his Spirit. Being conformed in some measure to his image in love, you shall in due time be with him where he is, and join that happy society who shall live together without envyings in uninterrupted love for ever, and ever.

SERMON XXVI.

ROMANS, vi. 1, 2.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

IT was prophetically said of Jesus Christ, that he should be for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that should be spoken against. And so it fared, both with himself and with his doctrine. He was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; and his doctrine has by many been called foolishness, by many been deemed licentiousness.

Of all the reproaches of the gospel there is

none more injurious than that which represents it as encouraging carelessness in practice, and opening the door to sin. Yet this slander which has continued to our own times, began with the first preaching of Christianity. The apostle supposes, and answers it in the text.

In considering this subject, I will endeavour to shew,

I. The nature and grounds of the objection supposed in the text.

II. The manner in which the apostle vindicates his doctrine from it.

I. To continue in sin that grace may abound, is a mistaken and wicked abuse of divine goodness, which encourages men to go on in a course of disobedience to the will of God; either because they think that his mercy is so great that they shall escape without punishment; or because they even imagine that the greater their sin is, the more his mercy will be magnified in forgiving it. They perversely argue that when they continue in sin, they give occasion for the abounding of his grace, and the advancing of his glory. This may be enough to say, in order to shew what is meant by continuing in sin, that grace may abound.

But as it would be a very strange thing for men to think in this manner, and a very wicked thing for them to act so; we must

suppose that Saint Paul saw some likelihood of their so thinking and acting, or he would not have guarded against it. Or rather, we may say, that he knew these licentious sentiments. "Let us do evil, that good may come." "Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound," would be represented by enemies to the gospel of Christ as the natural conclusion from its doctrines. He therefore anticipates the calumny in order to obviate it.

If we enquire what reason the apostle had to apprehend that his doctrine would be thus slandered: as there is nothing which is not capable of being misconceived, we shall find a shadow of ground for it in the truth itself. The doctrine of grace, as taught by Saint Paul, and by every preacher who speaks the truth as it is in Jesus, is so rich and large, that ignorant persons will always be apt to think it liable to the objection of giving encouragement to sin; and those who are disposed to cavil, will seize occasion hence, either to speak evil of the way of salvation, or actually to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. The views of grace which the apostle had been exhibiting immediately before the text, were such as might naturally lead him to expect this odious insinuation. He had been shewing, that as all mankind fell in Adam,

so all are restored in Christ. That "as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." And this obedience of Christ, the apostle shews, not only does away the effect of that one transgression of Adam; but justifies also from all the actual offences which men in their own persons have committed. Nay, he even goes so far as to say, that "the law entered, that the offence might abound." The weight of sin was made greater, that the grace which removed it might appear more illustrious; and the riches of divine mercy were enhanced, and set forth with more abundant glory, by the depth of sin into which a world of transgressors was sunk. If the sin had been less, the grace would not have been so great; at least, would not have shone so brightly.

Now, to those who know thus much of the gospel, and no more; who look upon it as a provision for freely covering the greatest sins, and nothing else; it is, we confess, an easy step to proceed a little farther, and to say, 'If the glory of God in pardoning sin is greater in proportion to the greatness of the sin which he pardons, in sinning I do him no wrong.' "If the truth of God abounds through

my lie to his glory, why am I judged as a sinner?" Such were the arguments urged against the preaching of the cross in the apostle's days. And if those ministers against whose doctrine the same arguments are at this day used, can defend themselves as the apostle did, it is rather a good sign than a bad one that they are thus reproached. It shews that they do not cloud the glory of the gospel by self-righteous conditions, detracting from the free grace of God; and if they can also shew that their doctrine in reality is not licentious, but a doctrine according to godliness, they approve themselves "workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Let us then see,

II. How the apostle vindicates his doctrine from the reproach of licentiousness, and answers the question, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" In which reply of the apostle, two things are to be noticed. It expresses his abhorrence of the thing as hateful, and his rejection of it as impossible.

He abhors the idea as hateful—"God forbid." What! make such a use of grace as to sin, that grace may abound! No; when the riches of grace are tasted, the God of grace is

loved too well for men to offend him because he is good. Grace and love on the part of God, when seen and known aright, have just the contrary effect, and engage a man's heart to love and obedience; even as the Psalmist says; "there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;" not terror or wrath with thee, that thou mayest be feared: these, indeed, will inspire fear; but they are not necessary to that end; forgiveness will do it as well. God forbid, then, that we should sin against God for that very reason, on account of which we ought to love and fear him. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid."

And as for the pretence that, where sin is great, God is in fact honoured by our sin, as it serves to magnify his mercy; it is too unreasonable to deserve consideration. Men may talk so by way of cavil; but surely no reasonable man could ever in his conscience think so. It is true, indeed, that the greater the sin is which grace pardons, the more glorious does that grace appear. If there had been no such thing as sin, it would never have been known that grace existed at all; or that God possessed such an attribute as forgiveness. But to argue from thence, that by sinning we honour God, is folly. To

those who are capable of considering the argument, it will be evident that it destroys itself; for if by sin we honour God, it in fact is no sin, and no grace is shewn in pardoning it. That which grace pardons, must be a thing displeasing to God, and dishonourable to his name; and the conscience of the sinner must apprehend it to be so; yea, and a thing to be grieved for and detested, not what we may venture to cherish, under the idea of advancing thereby the glory of God. God forbid, then, that we should sin, that grace may abound. Let sin be ever viewed by us as a thing to be abhorred, and infinitely hateful to the Most High; and let no idea of grace abounding by it, in any degree incline us to regard it with indulgence.

So much for the abhorrence which we may conceive to be implied in the apostle's answer—"God forbid." But he not only abhors the idea of living in sin, that grace may abound, as hateful, but moreover rejects it as impossible;—"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" These words clearly and unequivocally express, that every man who is a partaker of grace is, in such a sense, dead to sin; that the idea of his living in it is as absurd as to suppose a dead man to walk or speak, or perform any other functions of animal life.

And this is the proper and effectual answer to all objections and cavils of this nature. We need not give up one tittle of the freeness and fulness of grace. We need not invert the words of the Psalmist, and say, "Thou art feared, that there may be forgiveness with thee;" instead of "there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Let the words stand as they are. Let it be true, that where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. Still we say, so far is the abundance of grace from affording encouragement to sin, that it is the only thing which mortifies and slays it.

Forgiveness is the first benefit which we receive from Christ; but it is not the only one. Holiness, a new principle of spiritual life, proceeds from him alone; and is his gift of free grace, as much as the other. When we receive Jesus Christ by faith, what do we receive him for? Not only as guilty we believe in him, that he may forgive us; but also as dead in trespasses and sins, that he may quicken and renew us. This end is distinctly to be had in view when we believe in him, and is represented to us in the chapter from which the text is taken, under three distinct figures or emblems.

By conformity to the crucifixion, to the burial, and to the resurrection of Christ.

True believers are conformed to the cruci-

fixion of Christ in the destruction of the body of sin. A living body is not killed without pain, much less killed on a cross without it; neither is sin destroyed without a violent struggle. A Christian is crucified with Christ in the painful mortification of his darling lusts, and bosom sins. A carnal man loves his sins, and lives in the full indulgence of them, as far as opportunity affords, or considerations of health, reputation, or conscience will suffer him.

In most unregenerate men, the last mentioned consideration—conscience, works but feebly; though in some who are more awakened, it makes a loud remonstrance; checks in some measure the practice of sin, but cannot dethrone it in the heart. There it still lives and reigns, and is, on the whole, obeyed in the members; till the victorious grace, which is received on believing in Christ, fixes it to the cross, where it lives indeed, but in very different circumstances—no longer giving the law to the members, though still working in them; no longer causing the Christian to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, though sorely lusting against the spirit, and hindering him from doing the things that he would. The servant dying, is freed from his master; and he that is dead, is freed from sin. The sinful objects

which, while he was alive to them, ruled and governed him; now that he is crucified with Christ, find him insensible to their influence, and can command him no more.

The same truth is further represented by a conformity to the burial of Christ in baptism. The person immersed under the water, and again rising out of it, expressed his entering as one dead into the grave of Christ, so as to have no more concern with the vanities of the world, and the lusts of the flesh in which he formerly lived. "Know ye not," says Saint Paul, in the very next verse to the text, "that as many as were baptized unto Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we, also, should walk in newness of life. Now, if in our very baptism it is implied, that having the sins of our unconverted state washed away, we are buried with Christ unto death, so as to be dead to sin; how can we, then, live any longer therein? He who lives in sin is not dead to sin; and he who is not dead to sin belies his baptism, wherein he professes to be dead with Christ. So that such an one is altogether as if he were not baptized at all; his baptism is no baptism. Thus we see from the instance of

baptism which the apostle in the first place urges, that it is impossible for a man to continue in sin, that grace may abound; for if a man lives in sin, he has no part in grace. On the other hand, if he be a partaker of grace, he cannot live in sin.

See this great truth still further set forth in the same chapter by the resurrection of Christ, and our conformity to it in newness of life. If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is one part of a Christian's duty and wisdom in mortifying sin, to bear in mind the new state into which he is brought in Christ. He is not in that condition of wrath and weakness, in which the grace of Christ first visited him; but he is restored to favour, and furnished for obedience. This is life indeed; to be qualified for the service of God. To bring to God our dead offerings, and dead services, while our consciences are defiled with guilt, and our hearts averse to his law—how can they

be accepted? Alas! what service is this? Yet this is the price with which proud man would purchase the pardon of his sins, the favour of God, and even heaven itself; and thinks it licentious to talk of these things being given freely, without money, and without price. But no; if we wait till those dead works and formal duties, which our guilty consciences, and unrenewed hearts are capable of producing, shall procure for us the favour of God, we may wait to eternity. Behold! the text, and the chapter from which it is taken, declare to you a more excellent way.

Believe, that where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded. Fear not, I am not going to lead you to licentiousness. Receive in that grace, the free pardon of all your sins. Thus will your conscience be purged from dead works to serve the living God. You were dead in trespasses and sins, and could not serve God; but now you are quickened with divine life, and furnished for his service. Oh! glorious privilege! blessed change! You are now dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves

unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Here is your reasonable and honourable service, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. And those members of your body, and faculties of your mind, which once were employed in sinful works, and sinful inventions, should now be devoted to the service of God, and used as instruments of holiness. So they should be, and by the new creature, so they are. He is not under bondage to the law of sin any longer; the Son has set him free from that disgraceful servitude, and he is free indeed. "Sin shall not have dominion over you," says the apostle, "for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Though I have not confined myself to the method of a formal proof, but mixed exhortation with argument; I trust the foregoing considerations are sufficient to prove the great point implied in the latter part of the text: viz. that it is impossible for any who are really partakers of grace, to go upon the plan of sinning, that grace may abound. I trust it appears, that far from ministering to licentiousness, grace is the only source of true and acceptable obedience. Considering, therefore, the objection supposed in the text fully and

scripturally answered on the apostle's own plan, we may proceed to a few words of application.

1. Let me address myself to those who seek salvation not by faith, but by the works of the law. You think it licentious to look for salvation entirely by grace. You allow something to the merits of Christ; but you think some account must also be had of a man's own good or bad conduct; or all distinction of character is lost, and no encouragement given to virtue. Now, my dear brethren, herein you err: viz. that you separate faith from goodness. You suppose that a man may have faith, and not be a good man; or may be a good man, and yet not have faith. But what is this goodness which is independent of faith? If you weigh it in the balance of the sanctuary, you will find that it is altogether worthless. As long as lively faith in Christ is wanting, the conscience is defiled, the heart impure; God is viewed as an enemy, his law is considered as too strict, his service as hard. In this state of mind a man will do but little; and what he does will be nothing worth. Having no life, no love in it, God will not regard or accept it. It is faith, my brethren, that purifies the heart; and that which faith apprehends, is grace. When the grace of God which

bringeth salvation is received, it teaches men to live soberly, righteously, and godly; denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. When the love of God in Christ is apprehended, then God is looked upon as a friend, his law is perceived to be good, his service freedom; and his commandments are no longer grievous, because that which is born of God overcometh the world. So far, then, are you from pleasing God better, because you trust in part to your works, that this very thing hinders you from ever performing any service as you should do. Seek to be more convinced than you are of the abounding of grace. That you may not continue in sin, remember that grace abounds; grace large enough to cancel all your guilt, and powerful enough to subdue all your sin. Receive the abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, by Jesus Christ; and you shall be enabled to live with him in holiness here, and shall reign with him in life hereafter.

2. Let me, in the second place, address a few words to those who are disposed to continue in sin, that grace may abound. That men may turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, is past a doubt. There were those who did so in the apostle's days; and in every age there have been men who made no

better use of the gospel, than to harden themselves in a course of presumptuous sinning. Such persons look only on one side of religion. They act as if there was but one truth in the whole Bible; for they have neither eyes nor ears for any thing else. Of grace and free justification, and the privileges of the elect, they will be talking evermore; but if a word is said about holiness, and the duties of believers; they decry it as legal, and will hear nothing in this strain. They will pretend that they protest against these things, because they would stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free: but that liberty they never knew: it is a more glorious liberty than they ever tasted. The real thing which makes them so shy of practical instruction or discourse is, that they are in bondage under sin; and, therefore, like not to bring their religion into their hearts and consciences, but hold it entirely in their heads and tongues. Oh! what a strong delusion are you held in, my dear fellow-creatures, if any such be here present. Your conduct is careless, and void of holiness; yet if any tell you that this is not the way to heaven; you say, Christ is your righteousness, you do not seek to establish a righteousness of your own; this you leave for self-righteous Pharisees to do. And this name of Pharisee, and

self-righteous, you are ready to give to all who are earnestly working out their salvation, though they have a thousand times your humility. You actually sin, that grace may abound; but what signifies its abounding to you? You have no part in it. It is very true, that where sin abounded, grace does much more abound; but it abounds to the destruction of sin: it is not true, that grace and sin abound together, and go amicably hand in hand. But this point has been so largely proved already, that I need not insist further on it. One thing only I will add: if you will think yourselves at liberty to sin, because grace abounds, I must tell you that his servants you are, whom you obey. If you serve sin, notwithstanding all your talk of grace and perseverance, you must receive the wages of sin; "and the wages of sin is death."

Lastly, let me offer a little advice and direction to those who are in truth and sincerity seeking salvation by grace. Let the lamentable error of the characters last addressed teach you, my brethren, not to set up one truth or precept of religion above another. Do not look at doctrine only, nor at practice only; but at doctrine and practice. Remember that grace is a large and comprehensive word; that it includes many benefits; and that

you are not to take one of these, and leave others. Let me very briefly mention one or two extremes into which you may be apt to fall; and from which the caution above suggested may, by the blessing of God, tend to deliver you.

When you understand that salvation is altogether of grace, you may be tempted to be, in some degree, negligent about duty. Not connecting duty and salvation immediately together, the natural sloth of the heart may prevail with you to remit your diligence in working out your salvation. But remember that it is not forgiveness only and heaven that are of grace; but holiness is of grace also. Holiness is the fruit of forgiveness, the preparation for heaven; if you are not diligent in labouring to attain it, you can have no proof of pardon, no meetness for glory. In seeking for the abundance of grace, therefore, remember to seek that *all* grace may abound to you. That your peace and hope may abound; and also, that your love and fruitfulness may abound; and thus your weight of glory will be abundant also.

Again, when you see the danger of licentiousness, it will be very natural for you to fly from it to self-righteousness; when the motions of former sins again become troublesome, you

will be apt to strive against them in your own strength, and to let your peace of conscience be, in such a manner, determined by your victories, as in fact, to put those victories in the place of Christ, and greatly to depart from the freeness of grace, and the simplicity of faith. Ever bear in mind that Christ is all; that he is your sanctification, as well as righteousness. If guilt distresses your conscience, fly to him for peace: if sin wars in your members, plead with him for strength; and expect both one and the other equally, as the free gift of God. The victories which you obtain any other way, are not, in fact, victories. If sin is by such means suspended for a time, it is only suspended; its strength remains the same, and its hold on the heart entire. O, fly to Christ, and he will give you a glorious victory. He will dethrone sin, so that it shall not be able to maintain its place in your hearts. Thus, with your conscience at peace, and your heart renewed, you shall joyfully serve him. Your faith, though often tried, shall be strengthened by the trial. Your hope shall be confirmed by the growing evidence of your genuine grace. Your love to God and man, shall abound more and more; and as you will be more and more convinced that your pardon

sanctification, comfort, and all other good things which you receive in this world, are the unmerited gifts of grace; so you shall find in the world to come, that eternal life itself is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXVII.

JOHN, xvii. 4.

I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

IF in the whole course of a Christian's life on earth, there is any moment which may be pronounced completely happy, it is that triumphant one, when in the expectation of approaching death, he can look back on years in which he has walked with God, and adopt, in his humble measure, the language of the text. It is true, the words can never be spoken by any other person, in that full and complete sense in which they were used by our Lord. He had a greater work to perform than is charged upon the rest of the sons of

men; and he performed that work, and glorified his Father in a higher degree, and with a perfect obedience. From his child-hood up to that very moment, he had done the whole will of God: nothing had he omitted; in nothing had he transgressed. He had manifested the name, and taught the will of God to the men which had been given him out of the world; and was now ready to offer himself up without spot, a sacrifice for sin.

But though the words were uttered by our Lord in that absolute sense, in which it would be presumption for any mere man to adopt them; yet the same declaration must, in some real measure, be made by every one who would be saved. For every man is called upon to glorify God; every man has a work given him to do; and if death come upon him before that work is done, he must perish for ever.

My dear brethren, you know not how near death may be. Suppose it as near as it was in the contemplation of Jesus Christ, when he offered up that divine prayer, of which the text forms a part. And let me ask, in what state is the work of God? Have you glorified him, and performed the task assigned you? Or is the great work undone; perhaps not even attempted?

Permit me to assist you in putting to yourselves some very plain but important questions, founded on two opposite suppositions, as to the present state of your souls.

I. And the first supposition shall be—that you have been living for this world; either spending your time in vanity and pleasure, or engaged in the sober occupations of business. You may not have run to any excess of riot in your general practice; but, in however decent a manner, the cares and pursuits of this life have engrossed you wholly. Let me ask, then, when you come to die, will you be able to address God as a Father? Will each be able to say, "I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do?" Glorified God on earth! Alas! will not conscience, then, testify against you, that not a thought of this did you entertain? To glorify God was not the object which you, day by day, set before you. Your aim was to gratify yourselves, or to enrich and aggrandize your families. This it was, to which all your schemes and efforts were directed. You might be industrious; but you were doing your own work, not his. You will not be able, in that hour, to say, that you have finished the work which God gave you to do.

You look, perhaps, at your diligence in business; and plead, that you did your duty in that state of life to which it pleased God to call you. And, truly, had your diligence come in its proper place; had you first sought the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then made an exact attention to the duties of your calling, a part of your endeavour to glorify God; such industry in your earthly calling would have been sanctified, and become a spiritual service. But in that case, business would have been carried on with a very different spirit from that with which you conduct it. You would have left events with God; nor would diligence in your calling have been the only fruit which you had to shew. You would have been equally attentive to other modes of glorifying your heavenly Father, and finishing the work which he gave you to do.

But what, if you never seriously enquired what the work is which God has given you to do? What, if no proportion of your time, nor any serious thought has been given to this work? Should it appear, that in your whole life, you never used any holy violence to take the kingdom of heaven by force; never strove to enter in at the strait gate; but that your worldly calling not only employed your hands,

but also occupied your heart—What if little time or thought has been given to promote the cause of the gospel in the world; and still less to acquire the spirit of the gospel; little or no endeavour to depart from sin, and attain to holiness; no lust mortified, no evil dispositions overcome; but rather pride, discontent, murmuring, worldly-mindedness, covetousness, care, or luxury and self-indulgence, more and more grown upon you with growing years, according as different situations and circumstances gave occasion to each—Will you, in this case, be able to say to your heavenly Father, in a dying hour; "I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do?" Will not the whole life which you will have to look back upon, contradict such a declaration? Will not every evidence of a state of grace be wanting; and your condition, as to a future world, be deplorably hopeless?

I do not say that your salvation would then be impossible. But this I say: that the hope of an effectual death-bed repentance, is one of the most delusive imaginations which a man can entertain. Alas! a death-bed exhibits a man in a very unfit state to plead for mercy and grace! To extirpate old and deeply-rooted worldly lusts and affections; and to

acquire a taste for communion with God and heavenly employments, is not the work of a few days or hours.

Some years ago, I visited a very eminent Christian, in the advanced stage of that illness of which he afterwards died; and I well remember the reflection which he made. It was this: "what would become of me, if I had the work of religion to begin now!" But, happily, he had it not to begin; he had walked with God many years; and had nothing to do, but to submit to the painful process, for it was a painful one, by which he was to be removed to glory.

It may, however, not unfrequently be found, even in real Christians, that the faith and love which were become, in some degree, languid by the intercourse and business of the world, have been brought into purer and stronger exercise by the prospect of eternity. But when there has been no faith or love in existence before, the most promising appearances which are produced by the near approach of death and judgment, cannot be viewed without suspicion. Some examples of genuine repentance, in such circumstances, may have been; but, in general, we must strongly assert, that a dying hour is not the time to kindle the flame of divine affections;

nor is it then the season for a professing Christian to buy oil, and trim his extinguished lamp; when the mid-night cry is made, "behold the bride-groom cometh, go ye out to meet him."

And if a late repentance is hazardous and suspicious; what if it should fail, and you actually go out of the world, your work undone. Oh! who can describe the anguish with which you will see the opportunity gone for ever, and the great end of life unaccomplished! What comfort will it be to you, that ye have laboured prosperously in temporal things, when you have failed of things eternal? How well will you then understand the force of our Lord's words: "what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul: or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

But let me turn from this dark and painful view, and make now the contrary supposition.

II. Let me suppose that you have glorified God, and not left undone, the work which he gave you to do; and this in three respects.

That you have believed in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.

That you have laboured after the attainment of Christian graces. And,

That you have served your generation.

The first of these is *indispensable.* It is *the foundation* of all the rest. If this be not done, *nothing is done.* It is the great duty which God requires of us. "This is the work of God, that ye believe him whom he hath sent." On our attending, or not attending to this, the favour or displeasure of God is suspended. "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Nay, here is life or death: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This great work I will suppose that you have done. It is happy for you. You will feel it so, when you lie on a dying bed. An unspeakable comfort will it then be to you, to know whom you have believed; and when you look back on life, in no mean sense will you be able to adopt the words; "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." If you have believed in Jesus for salvation, you may then say, 'Father, however *unworthy and evil I be,* yet I have not dishonoured thee by unbelief; but have set to my seal that thou art true. Thou hast set forth thy Son as a Saviour for

sinful men; and thou knowest that I have received thy word, and believed that thou hast sent him. Ever since I knew him, he has been all my salvation, and all my desire; and to this moment I have no other confidence; I desire to be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ.'

My brethren, such a distinct knowledge of Christ, and conscious faith in him, will, in your last moments, be worth more to you than worlds.

And if you possess this precious faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not be without the proper evidence of it. It is never barren and unfruitful. It is the parent of temperance, patience, gentleness, long-suffering, peace, joy, and love; and though you will have nothing to boast of, but will feel an evil heart, and in-dwelling sin all your days; yet these gracious fruits will be a comfortable evidence to you, when you are leaving the world. The remembrance of the conflict in which you have been so long engaged, and in which you have often had to struggle so hard for victory, will fill your soul with joy, when your warfare is about to be accomplished. This was the comfort of Saint Paul, in the near prospect of his death: "I am now going to be offered," he

says, "and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day."

In this attainment of Christian graces will consist your *meetness for heaven*. Your *title to it* is the *righteousness of Jesus Christ;* but your *qualification for the enjoyment of it consists entirely in holy dispositions*, in the *conformity of your spirit to the will of God, and to the mind that was in Christ Jesus.* No outward actions, however useful, or even splendid, are to be mentioned here. If you literally went about doing good, and gave all your goods to feed the poor, and your body to be burned; still it is true, that *no actions* of any kind make you *meet* for heaven. Your *meetness* must arise from *inward dispositions*; "blessed are the *pure in heart,* for they shall see God." *Purity, peace, love*; these are the tempers of heaven; and these, O believers, are your *qualifications* for it.

But though no outward actions make a man meet for heaven, yet they may be the proofs of that meetness. If they are works of faith, humility, love, they shew that faith, humility, and love dwell in the heart. And further, in

another point of view, they are of the highest importance. It is by these that God is glorified; and by these, O followers of Christ, your generation is served. Therefore, Saint Paul says to Titus—"this is a faithful saying; and these things I will that thou affirm constantly: that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." These things are good and profitable unto men. Again he exhorts; "while we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men; especially unto them that are of the household of faith." Nay, a Christian cannot be said to finish the work which his Father has given him to do, unless he daily employs himself according to his place and station, in doing good.

If I make the supposition that you have believed in Christ; and that you are following after faith, hope, love, with them that call upon God out of a pure conscience; I must also suppose, that you are letting your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. And if you have been thus fruitful in good works, you may take the comfort of them in a dying hour. For though they are not *the ground of your acceptance*; yet, as you are accepted in Christ, they are accepted also as being wrought in him; and they shall

all be owned and rewarded at the last day; not the least of them, not even a cup of cold water given to a disciple, shall lose its reward. And in proportion to a man's fruitfulness, shall be his recompence. "He that hath sowed sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he that hath sowed plenteously, shall reap also plenteously."

Thus our Lord represents the proceedings of the last day as regulated by this very consideration: the respective dooms of the two divisions of mankind are determined by their works. Did they, or did they not feed the hungry brethren of Christ, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and imprisoned? The answer to this question decides their everlasting state.

When our Lord had said, "I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;" he immediately adds, "and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thy own self." And thus, in the case of every true Christian, though no work or service of his can constitute a claim, yet the obedience and the glory are in sure connexion. He who can say with his Saviour, "I have *glorified* thee on earth," shall with his Saviour *be glorified;* being made partaker of his image here, he shall see him face to face hereafter.

For so has Jesus himself declared his good pleasure: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may *behold* my *glory* which thou hast given me."

I would now conclude by adding, from what has been said, a few words of exhortation.

You have seen, my brethren, how unspeakable the difference on a death-bed, between the state of the man who has lived as without God in the world; and of him who has believed in Jesus Christ, and exhibited the fruits of faith in a holy and useful life. How dark the prospects of the former; how happy, and how triumphant, those of the latter! Suffer me, then, to urge, and to direct you in this great work.

1. Make the thought of death familiar. Realise often that time, which cannot be far distant, when you must feel that you are about to leave all below, and to enter on the eternal world. Let your whole work of religion be carried on with a reference to this time. Seek, in the first place, peace with God, reconciliation through Jesus Christ, that you may be ready to die whenever it shall please God to call you hence. Remember that those are in darkness, on whom that day will come as a

thief. If you are in the light, you are prepared; and the summons of that terrible messenger will not startle or dismay you. O, happy state! Labour to attain it. Fly for refuge to Christ; strive to obtain an interest in him; cry to him mightily for mercy and grace!

And when you have obtained a measure of peace in believing, and a good hope through grace; endeavour to walk with God day by day, as a child with his father; and learn the happy art of accepting each day as it comes, as one added to you, and given to be improved. When you lie down to rest, let it be with the peace of God ruling in your heart; with some comfortable assurance that the great work is done; and that you are ready, even if you should awake no more in this world; and when you rise, let it be to glorify God, to do his will. Think, 'what is the will of God concerning me this day? How shall I honour him; how serve my generation?' Call upon him for strength and wisdom, and then go forth to meet the duties of the day, to bear the crosses which he may lay upon you, to acknowledge thankfully the mercies with which he loads you, to commit to him your concerns, and to cast on him all your cares.

Thus, living day by day, performing the duty of each day, and letting the evil thereof

suffice for it; not taking thought for the morrow, nor suffering your minds to be distracted by a variety of earthly cares; wait for the salvation of God. The expected period will come. The storms of life will cease; your conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil will be at an end; the last enemy only will remain; and that enemy, O, glorious thought! a vanquished one. In Jesus you are made conquerors over death already; you need be in bondage under the fear of him no more; you may turn to him in triumph, and say, "O death! where is thy sting?"

You know that his sting is sin, and that the strength of sin is the law; but you know also, that God has given you the victory through Jesus Christ. Be thankful for the unspeakable gift; and learn both to live above the fear of death yourselves, through the faith of Jesus; and not to sorrow as men without hope for them that sleep in him. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again; so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

O, what a glorious hour will that be to those who have known Christ, who have believed in him and loved him! They shall rest from their labours, and their works shall follow them.

But how dreadful to those who have neglected the great work which God gave them

to do! How will they stand before their judge, how give an account of the talents committed to them! Instead of "Lord thy pound hath gained five pounds, or ten pounds," to say here is thy pound which I have laid up in a napkin; or, perhaps, not even that, but the pound squandered, or abused for evil purposes! What, O what will be the doom of this unprofitable servant, but to be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Be warned, my Friends, by this awful example, and work the work of him that sent you into the world, while it is day; remembering that the night cometh when no man can work.

SERMON XXVIII.

PSALMS, xvii. 15.

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

THE words, "as for me," with which the text is introduced, denote that the sentiment which follows is the deliberate purpose of the Psalmist. It is the determination which he comes to, after weighing in his mind different schemes of life, and contemplating the pursuits of other men. He beheld the children of this world, following after wealth or pleasure, and placing their happiness in the attainment of these objects. He considered the utmost that could be made of this course of life, when

taken at the very best; when to abundance of wealth and delights of every kind, were added a numerous progeny, in whom that wealth and those pleasures might be perpetuated. And the result was, that far from envying the men of God's hand, whose bellies he filled with his hid treasure; who had children at their desire, and left the rest of their substance to their babes; he determined not to tread in their steps; not to look for his portion in this world; but to seek it in the world to come. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

As Joshua said, "as for me and my house we will serve the Lord:" so David, with a purpose equally fixed, could say; "as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness." His heart panted after God, yea after the living God. One thing he felt and was assured of, that to see God, and to be like him, was the true happiness of man. This therefore he laboured to attain: and he was persuaded that one day he should attain it; should awake after the divine likeness, and be satisfied. But there was a certain *order* in which it was to be sought; he knew, that "though a man strive, yet he is not crowned, unless he strive lawfully." It was in the way of righte-

ousness alone, that he could behold the presence of God, and in that way only could he hope to awake after his likeness. "I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

In order rightly to understand this important passage, we must first enquire what is the meaning of the word *righteousness:* for in that word lies the true secret of attaining to the image and enjoyment of God.

After which we may consider the connexion between beholding the face of God, and possessing his likeness. And,

Lastly, may contemplate the full and final happiness of man, as consisting in this vision and similitude of God.

The word righteousness expresses either a state or a character. It expresses a state of acceptance or justification. This is by no means an unusual sense of the word righteousness in the Old Testament; "I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry." "My righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation: he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." In all these passages it is evident that

righteousness and salvation are used as terms of like signification. So Jesus Christ is called by the prophet Jeremiah, "the Lord our righteousness." This character is recognised also in the New Testament: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth;" and he is said to have been made "sin for us, though he knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It is in this righteousness alone that any mortal man can behold the presence of God. For we are all sinful dust and ashes; and, therefore, could not endure the brightness of his glory, did not a sinless Mediator interpose between him and us. If we look upon God out of Christ, we shall find him only a consuming fire; for what else can a just and holy God be to sinful creatures? It is in Christ only, that we can behold him as reconciled, and walk with him in love as dear children. And when that great day shall come, which shall burn as an oven, those only shall behold his face with comfort, who shall be found in Christ; not having their own righteousness which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Thus the word righteousness expresses a state of forgiveness and reconcilia-

tion; the condition of those who are in Christ Jesus, to whom there is no condemnation, but who have passed from death unto life.

But the word denotes also a character, as well as a state. It signifies a holy disposition of soul. And this is absolutely necessary, in order to behold the face of God. It is requisite as a qualification. A wicked man is incapable of deriving any comfort or delight from the divine presence: and, therefore, our Lord himself assigns to the pure in heart, the blessedness of seeing God; because they only are capable of such enjoyment. Thus also Saint Paul says, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." There must, in the very nature of the thing, be an agreement, a suitableness, between the disposition of a man's mind, and the object which is to afford him happiness. A man, whose inclination leads to festivity and riotous excess, will not often relish the severer pursuits of science: nor will the student delight in drunken carousals. In these things, however, there is no such absolute inconsistency, but that there may be found in the same man, a taste which can adapt itself to pleasures and pursuits of different kinds. But there are other things which are absolutely incompatable, which cannot exist together. A good man cannot delight in the company of

profane persons, nor have a pleasure in hearing their curses and imprecations; nor can a wicked man find gratification in the solemn worship of God; much less is he capable of enjoying heaven, where that worship is holy and spiritual in the highest degree. Whoever, therefore, purposes to see God, and would not be disappointed in his hope, must purpose to behold his face in *righteousness;* both as a justified person accepted in the beloved, and accounted righteous for the merits of Christ; and also as a sanctified person, renewed in righteousness after the likeness of his Saviour, and thus made meet for the enjoyment of God.

I have used many words to explain the signification of the word righteousness, in order to shew you, as far as I am able, what must enter into the determination of him who would behold the face of God. And you will remember, that its full meaning is comprized in two things: justification and sanctification; in the former of which consists our *title* to life; in the latter, our *fitness* for it.

Having seen, then, thus at large, what are the previous steps, the qualifications to be attained on earth, if we would see the face of God with joy in heaven. The remaining part of our subject leads us to contemplate the heavenly state itself. What is the nature, and

what the measure of that happiness? The nature of it is expressed by beholding the face of God, and being like him; and the measure of it is signified in these expressive words, "I shall be satisfied."

Each of these we propose to consider separately.

And, with respect to the former of them, the nature of heavenly happiness; the language of the text leads us to conclude that there is a certain connexion between seeing God, and being like him; so that the one is a token or pledge of the other. "I will behold thy face"—"I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." Such a connexion there is; and that on each side. Beholding the face of God, tends to produce his likeness in those who do behold it; and possessing his likeness enables those who are partakers of it, to behold more clearly and fully, his glory and beauty.

There is, in the sight of God, a transforming efficacy. As luminous bodies shed a light on surrounding objects, whereby they likewise appear luminous; so those who behold the glory of God do, in some measure, reflect that glory themselves. It not only shines upon them, but also shines forth from them. While they contemplate the perfections of God, they become like him; and the excel-

lencies which they admire are, in some degree, wrought in themselves. "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Thus the beloved disciple, St. John, speaking of the heavenly state, says, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The excellencies of the divine character cannot be contemplated by a holy soul without producing their own resemblance. Even on earth what good men see of God, tends to make them like him. What they see, they admire. What a man really admires and loves, he is. He has made some proficiency: and that admiration and love lead to imitation; to an actual endeavour to follow the bright example, and attain the excellence which he approves. Moreover that powerful agent, the Holy Spirit, who fixed the eyes of the mind on the divine character; who wrought that admiration, and excited those endeavours; does himself, by his mighty operation, render all other means efficacious, and forms in the soul the image of God. Thus it is most evident, that seeing God is a powerful means of producing conformity to him; and if this is the case

with the faint glimpses of earth, how much more will it be so in the perfect vision of heaven! One reason why glorified saints will be *like God* is, that they will *see him as he is.*

But further, being like him, they will be far better able to discern his glory. In heaven we are well assured, that the manifestations of divine glory will be far clearer than they are on earth; for here we are said to see only as in a glass darkly; but there, face to face. But this will not be all; there will not only be a brighter manifestation, but a clearer faculty to discern it.

Consider how much God is hidden from us in this world, not by want of evidence merely, or of what may be called objective light; but by the dulness of our understandings, and the blindness of our hearts making us slow to perceive him; and by our sensual lusts, and worldly cares and pursuits, which divert our attention from him. Hence it is, in part, that we "go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but we cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but we cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that we cannot see him."

Suppose an inhabitant of heaven to visit our earth, and forgetting all the manifestations of the god-head which he had seen above,

to behold him only in his works, and in his word, as mortals do below; would such a being find himself at a loss for tokens of the divine presence? Would he not see God in every thing around him? Would not heaven, and earth, and all the elements, proclaim to him the eternal power and god-head by which they were created, and by which they are still preserved? Would he not see the goodness of God in all the benefits which he enjoyed? In short, would not such an intelligence, even in this world, find God presented to his view by every object which he met with?

How much more, then, in heaven must God be fully known by the blessed inhabitants, when to the same pure mind, and unclouded understanding, is added a brighter manifestation! There God will shew himself, not as in a glass darkly, but face to face; and shew himself to those from whose hearts every prejudice and corrupt affection will be purged away, and from whose eyes every veil will be removed.

Thus, as seeing God produces a likeness to him; so, on the other hand, a likeness to him qualifies the soul to behold him. In heaven we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is; and we shall see him the better, because we shall be like him. Like-

ness to him will render us quick-sighted to behold his glory; and the sight of his glory will confirm and increase that blessed resemblance.

Such is the *nature* of heavenly happiness: it consists in seeing God, and being like him; and the *measure* of it is well expressed in those words; "I shall be satisfied." For this fills the soul. Nothing else can do it. While a man roams among the creatures in quest of a substantial and satisfying good, he is restless and dissatisfied, meeting with vanity and vexation of spirit: but when he sees God, and knows God, then he finds rest to his soul. This is the good for which he was formed, which is suited to his nature, and which is sufficient to fill and satisfy his largest desires. This blessedness David assured himself should be his, and comforted himself under the emptiness of *earthly* things, by the grateful prospect. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

In these words he evidently points to the resurrection. To "awake" implies a previous sleeping. Who is he that awakes, but the same which also slept? Some glimpses of the divine glory, and something of conformity to his image, the Psalmist might hope to attain here below; but here could be only the first

fruits; the fulness must be hereafter, when he should awake. He knew that he must sleep in death, and that his body must be laid in the grave; but he knew also, that it should not be left there; that it should be raised incorruptible and glorious; while his soul, purified from all the remains of sin, should perfectly reflect the image of his Maker, in righteousness and true holiness. Then his bliss would be complete; there would remain no wish unaccomplished, no want unsupplied; he would awake after the likeness of his Saviour, and be satisfied.

In drawing practical instruction from this important subject; I would, in the first place, affectionately exhort every man diligently to search out his own spirit, and to see what is the ruling inclination of his heart. And this enquiry is simple and short. He has not to find out his place among a great variety of characters, so as to discover what rank he should occupy among many classes into which the human race may be distributed: but in order to answer the intent of the great subject before us, he has only to regard two great divisions of mankind: the men of the world, who have their portion in this life; and the children of God, who have their portion in the next. Between these two descriptions of men,

the marks of distinction are broad and obvious. They who are of the earth, are earthly: and they who are travelling heaven-ward, are heavenly in their dispositions. They that are of the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh: and they that are of the spirit, do mind the things of the spirit. The taste of the men of the world, is for worldly things: to increase in riches, to rise to consequence and respectability, to fare sumptuously, to live at ease, or in the hurry and bustle of successful business; to cut a figure in the world, and to leave a numerous family in affluent circumstances; these are the things which occupy the man of the world, and complete his notion of happiness. But of happiness in communion with God he has no idea. What he does in religion is a drudgery; he has no delight in exercises of devotion; nor does he think of holiness, as being itself happiness; but he looks upon it as something which he must needs attain in some degree, in order to be admitted into heaven; whereas the children of God are fully purposed to seek their supreme good in him. When he says to them, "seek ye my face;" their hearts answer, 'thy face, Lord, we will seek.'

Nor do they pursue this great object in a blind manner, running uncertainly: they la-

bour to see his face in righteousness. Their first great object is, to obtain an interest in their Redeemer's righteousness; to be justified by his grace, having all their trespasses forgiven. Here they lay the foundation of their hope deep and strong; and as they know that heaven is a holy place, and that the happiness of heaven consists in holy exercises and joys; they strive to attain here, a taste for the same employments and delights.

Oh! my brethren, that each of you would put the question home; 'to which of these characters do I belong?' and let conscience give a faithful answer.

Further, to every man who either doubts whether he can be ranked among the children of God, or has a good hope that he is such; I would say, make the matter certain, if doubtful; or if not doubtful, confirm and increase your confidence and joy, by growing in the knowledge and likeness of God. It is now perfectly clear what is the happiness you were made for; what that is in which your final blessedness must consist. And if the true happiness of man has been ascertained, lose no time in pursuing it. There is one thing, and only one thing which can make you happy: the image of Christ. Every day you live, then, endeavour to be acquiring more of

this. You may become richer, and yet be no happier at all. You may have a great variety of what the world calls pleasure, without encreasing your stock of happiness. You may be surrounded with all the comforts and elegancies of life, and God may fill your belly with his hid treasure; and still you may be unsatisfied and joyless. But you cannot become more holy, more like to Christ, without being happier. You can not see more of his grace and glory, without tasting more largely of substantial joy. Be not diverted, then, by the golden apples of pleasure or of gain, from that course in which alone you can find full satisfaction.

And if you do this, indeed, and say as David did, with full purpose of heart, "as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness;" you may, with the same assurance which he possessed, go on and say, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." For God has in store the same good thing for you, which he provided for him; so that he without you, shall not be made perfect. When David awakes from the grave, and is presented before the divine glory with exceeding joy, you shall be presented also. You shall have part in that resurrection, and be satisfied as well as he.

Let this thought comfort and refresh your spirit under the troubles and trials of the present time. Be not swallowed up of overmuch sorrow, even though affliction should abound. If your portion were in this life, you might well be disheartened when that portion was marred; but now is your portion not in this life; it is safely laid up there, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. Be comforted, then, your treasure is safe. The trials you may meet with here are meant to prepare you for it, and to enhance it to you. Wait only with patience, all the days of your appointed time; and when those days are ended, you shall be put in possession of your heavenly inheritance, and shall be satisfied with it.

SERMON XXIX*.

2 PETER, i. 10.

Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.

WHENEVER events take place, which strongly call forth the passions and exertions of men on any earthly question, such a time is peculiarly unfavourable to the work of religion. The things that are seen, naturally weigh with us beyond the things which are not seen; so that even in the calm and ordinary course of human affairs, it is no easy task to give its due weight to eternity, and to make the care of the soul the first concern. What

* Preached on the close of a contested election, occasioned by a vacancy in the representation of Carlisle.

must be the case then in uncommon emergencies, when matters of great interest are depending—When all the energies of men are alive and in action—When there is zeal, and competition, and contrivance, and diligence, and animosity—When every tongue is speaking on the same subject, and it seems, as it were, the one thing needful? At such a juncture, compared with the importance of the objects in view, what a poor and little thing does the care of the soul appear. The vanities of time, cause the realities of eternity to vanish before them; as a glaring meteor, which is but for a moment, eclipses the steady and enduring light of the stars.

Such a season we have just witnessed; and I cannot but fear that it has produced the lamentable effect above described. I cannot but fear, that the minds of many are too full of the impressions which they have received in those scenes of contention, to hear the voice of the preacher calling them to attend to the work of salvation, as the first and chiefest concern.

Yet, even from this unfavourable subject, we may draw some important topics of instruction in the business of religion. There are points, both of resemblance and of contrast, which we may advantageously attend to; and

the object of this present discourse will be to trace this resemblance, or this contrast, according as each may discover itself in a few leading points, which will be mentioned in succession.

I. In the comparative objects of pursuit.

The word election has become familiar to our ears. In the worldly or political sense of the term its meaning is sufficiently understood: and you have seen what efforts have been made to secure it—how every nerve has been strained—every expedient employed—no labour declined—no expence shunned, by which the desired object might be attained. Do I speak thus as blaming such exertions? By no means: provided honest arts only be employed, I readily own that few earthly things are more worthy of a generous ambition than a seat in the British Parliament.

But if we may allow that the securing of this election deserves so much care and attention; how much more care, and how much greater attention does that calling and election demand which you are enjoined to make sure! For you, my dear brethren, you also are candidates—candidates for salvation! candidates for glory, and honour, and immortality!

I beseech you, do not *so* attend to the election of others, as to forget your own. Surely your own soul is of more importance to you than another man's distinction. Whatever considerations may recommend a candidate to your esteem, or to your choice, they cannot be comparable with those which relate to the great work of your own salvation. It is well you should care for your friend—It is well you should care for the interests of your city—But that care passes the due bounds, if it makes you look on the work of religion as a secondary concern, which you will attend to at your leisure, but which cannot be regarded in the midst of affairs of so much interest and importance. Ah! let the activity lately displayed, convince you how dangerous it is to remit your care, to relax your endeavours in making sure your election. If *you* are not active, your adversary will not fail to be so. The time of trial is short: it will soon be over. A few years, and all will be decided. Then what will it avail you to have carried your point in such a contest as this, if after all you lose your soul, and perish everlastingly? Or, on the other hand, is it a grievous thing to be disappointed? Oh! how infinitely more grievous to be disappointed of heaven, and to come short of the immortal prize!

Open your eyes, my dear friends, to the truth. See things in their real light. You have worldly business to attend to; and you are so connected with the community, that you cannot and ought not to be indifferent to political considerations. But you have also souls to be saved! To flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life to which you are called; this should be the object nearest your heart, the work in which you are most vigorously employed.

II. A second point in which there appears perhaps more of contrast than resemblance to be found in the means which you must use, to make your calling and election sure.

In considering this, I must remind you of the peculiar nature of that calling and that election. You are not called of men, nor chosen by the voices of men; but he that hath called you is God. And if you are chosen, it is also God who hath chosen you to salvation. You are in his hands as clay is in the hands of the potter. As the potter has power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour; so God has a like uncontrolled power over you. He can either shew his wrath, and make his power known in you, as vessels of wrath filled for destruction; or he can make known the

riches of his glory in you, as vessels of mercy whom he hath afore prepared unto glory.

In either issue, to him the result will be glorious: in the one case, displaying the long-suffering patience with which he for a season endured you, and the righteous judgment with which he at last took vengeance; in the other, manifesting the abundance of his mercy, the riches of his grace. Thus God must and will be glorified, whether it be by your salvation, or whether it be by your destruction. But to you the alternative is unspeakably important. It is life or death; eternal life or eternal death; everlasting happiness or everlasting misery.

And will you not think of this? Will you let your mind be agitated about the contests of a moment, and forget the concerns of eternity? Alas! what matters it who represents you in parliament, if your own name be not found in the book of life; if you forfeit your seat in heaven, and be condemned to take up your abode in hell! Again I ask, will you not give diligence to make sure this high calling, this momentous election? Have you seen the candidates for an earthly honour take so much pains, and sue and beg of men much inferior to themselves; though in each instance, even if they succeed, they do but gain

a single vote, which goes but a little way: and will not you take pains to ask and plead for an immortal crown; to ask of him who is infinitely higher than the highest of earthly dignities; and in whose single power is all that you want; so that if he accepts your prayers, you are happy for ever more; if he rejects you, undone to eternity.

And it is not with him as it is with men. With men, entreaty, however sincere and earnest, may be in vain; but not so with God: all who ask of him, and ask in truth, are sure to succeed.

III. But this remark leads me to the consideration of another particular, in which there is both resemblance and contrast.

In an election to a vacant seat, we see several competitors start; but we know that only one of those competitors can succeed. It is here, as it is in a race: they that run in a race, run all; but one receiveth the prize. And this is the point, in which there is both a resemblance and a contrast in the spiritual calling and election. Many begin the heavenly race, but fall short of the prize; "many are called, but few are chosen." I repeat these last words of our Lord, for they are very momentous: "many are called, but few are chosen."

Yet they are not to be understood as if there was an exclusion; as if the success of some must hinder that of others; for in this respect there is a blessed contrast between such elections as we see on earth, and the heavenly calling and election of Christians. In the hope of that calling there is no exclusion, no interference; one does not hinder another, nor must I fail, because my neighbour succeeds. On the contrary, my neighbour's success would make him the best possible helper to me in my endeavours to attain the same glorious abode. Nor is there any thing to hinder our walking thither hand in hand, and both gaining admission there, together with the innumerable company of the redeemed. For in our Father's house are many mansions; and our Fore-runner, who has entered for us, will not fail to prepare a place for every one who believes in him.

IV. There is another important point in which a considerable resemblance may be observed.

An election is productive of a strong effect on the dispositions of men towards each other. It is often the cause of new friendships being formed; and as often the cause of old friendships being rent asunder. It brings into close contact, those who before were almost stran-

gers; and causes divisions between persons of the same family, of the same household. And often the misunderstandings which have arisen from this cause, between persons once united in the bonds of brotherly love, have been very serious, and very lasting. Most earnestly do I hope that such will not be the case at this time; that the bonds of domestic charity will not be rent asunder; but that the animosities kindled by the contest will die away with it: that the unkind and uncharitable things which have been uttered in the heat of the moment, will be forgotten; and that the misrepresentations which have been circulated will be forgiven by those who suffered by them, and sincerely repented of by those who could be so misguided as to think that any cause deserved to be so supported.

But while I thus express what is my earnest and ardent wish, I must not forget the ground on which I entered on this point; which was to shew the resemblance, which in this particular appears between the scenes that we have witnessed, and the heavenly calling and election.

The gospel produces often the kind of misunderstanding which has been mentioned, among near friends. So much so, that in allusion to this very effect our Lord says,

"think not I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own house." This was no doubt eminently the case at the first preaching of Christianity; but in every age it will be true, that those who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution. Wherever there is one godly character in a family of ungodly persons, that one is sure to be mocked by the rest. He will not with impunity be permitted to condemn them by a more faithful profession, and a holier life. He must be content to bear their contradiction; till, by a wise and consistent course, he has lived down reproach; and by well-doing, put to silence the ignorance of the foolish.

And the same cause which excites persecution among those who are of the same house, in more distant connections, produces estrangement.—Religion often dissolves old friendships. The ways of the world are no longer pleasing to the regenerate man; and the ways of religion are *never* pleasing to the natural man. Thus it is, that those who used to agree in habits and taste, can now have no more communion; for what fellowship hath

light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial? A true believer will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but will rather reprove them. He is crucified to the world, and the world to him. He abhors the evil ways of the world, and the world abhors his self-denying and heavenly course. Hence it was, that the Saviour himself was hated by the world; because he bore testimony against it, that its works were evil; and the disciple must not expect to be above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, they will so call them of his household.

Let every professing Christian, then, see whether he has experienced any thing of this effect. If not, it is to be feared he has not decided for Christ and heaven. Let him here again borrow a little instruction from the scenes we have witnessed. Could any man take a decisive part on either side, without meeting with reproach from the contrary? Even so, whoever will be in earnest in religion, will meet with persecution from the world; he must lay his account for it. There is no standing neuter in this cause; for he that is not with Christ, is against him; and whoever is ashamed of Christ, Christ will be ashamed of him.

Here is the trial, then; to bear the displeasure or estrangement of near and beloved friends, for the sake of Christ, and a good conscience. In proportion as a man does this, he shall not fail of his reward; for our Lord says, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's; but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children and lands, with persecutions; and, in the world to come, eternal life."

These words shew the other side of the resemblance; for there are not only old associates displeased and lost by religion; but also new ones gained; and the more faithful and devoted any man is, of the same faithful and devoted character will his new Christian friends be. These are friendships indeed, which are formed on the basis of Christian love: not hollow and empty, like the friendships of the world; but sincere, pure, fervent, and abiding.

And it is the nature of religion to produce these friendships. It produces, as we have seen, the contrary, viz. division; but this is not its nature; it is a consequence which attends it from the depraved state of man;

not a fruit of religion itself. But when it produces the brotherly love just spoken of, it then works its own proper effect. For what is the grand end of religion but love; God is love; and when we dwell in love, we dwell in God, and God in us.

V. I have but one point more to mention, in which there is no resemblance, but contrast only. It is a point which has already been mentioned repeatedly in this discourse; but not enlarged on, as its importance deserves. Not that it is any thing new or profound. No; it is a plain, obvious, universally-acknowledged truth; but which needs to be often brought to remembrance, because every heart is prone to forget it.

For what, then, has been the contest which we have witnessed? What is the value of the distinction sought? Its due and reasonable worth has been already admitted; nor do I wish to detract from it in the smallest degree. Rate it as high as you please; still it must be remembered, it is a transient honour. A very few years must bring it to its close. And life itself is such a vapour, that it may not last, even during the short continuance of this limited period. The honour is conferred upon a frail dying mortal; and he who is one day borne in his embellished chair, the idol of

an applauding throng, is another day conveyed, in the mournful hearse, to "the house appointed for all living."

If this, then, is worthy of being sought with so much diligence; what care, what labour, what attention, can be adequate to the great object which is placed before you? O, that I had words to express its worth, and to urge you to the pursuit in a manner suitable to its importance! A house eternal in the heavens! An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away! A crown of righteousness, and of glory! These high objects the gospel sets before you; not a seat, which (though in the most august house, and amongst the first men in the first nation on the earth) is yet a transient seat, and among men, evil and corrupt, fallen from their true glory of righteousness and holiness, or but imperfectly recovered to it; but an enduring place in an eternal house, amid the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven.

Seek this high advancement, and you shall not fail to succeed. He who has called you to glory and virtue, will give you all things which pertain to life and godliness. He has already given you great and precious promises, that by them ye might be partakers of the divine na-

ture; having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust. You have not to collect *votes* in order to make your calling and election sure, for you have been shewn that all depends on the will of one; even God. But you should seek to accumulate *evidences; proofs* to your own consciences and to others, that the grace of God is with you of a truth, and that you are, indeed, partakers of his salvation. "Therefore giving all diligence; add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off; and hath forgotten that he is purged from his former sins. Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

SERMON XXX.

Rom. ix. 22, 23.

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.

AS God is in his own nature incomprehensible, so his dispensations towards men partake of the same character, and are incomprehensible also. His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out. It becomes us therefore in contemplating the divine proceedings, to be sensible how incompetent judges we are of what is fit and right for God to do. It is our wisdom to

know where to stop ; to be content with the things that are revealed ; and not to aim at being wise above what is written, nor to pry with an eager and hurtful curiosity, into those secret things which belong unto the Lord our God.

But though the desire of intruding into things not seen deserves to be censured as the effect of a proud and fleshly mind ; yet all enquiry, even into the deep things of God, is not to be repressed. To a certain extent, even here, it has pleased God to lift up the veil which hides his dispensations; and to proceed *so far* with humility and reverence, is by no means unprofitable, provided only we bear in mind, that no conclusions drawn from doctrines which we very imperfectly understand, must be suffered for a moment to interfere with known and evident truths. That God is Love ; that he is light, and that in him is no darkness at all ; that he is no respecter of persons ; that there is no unrighteousness with him ; that he is just, and wise, and good ; are propositions so clearly laid down in Scripture, as not to admit of the possibility of a mistake. If therefore we see in any doctrine what appears to militate against these first principles of religion, the reason must be, that we do not understand that doctrine. We

must not however suppose ourselves at liberty to deny what is revealed in Scripture; or to say of any doctrine that it is not true, or that it is not to be understood according to the plain and natural sense of the words, merely because we cannot reconcile it with the acknowledged attributes of God. It may be true notwithstanding this. Many things are evidently and undeniably true, which we cannot make to harmonize with the divine perfections. As yet we see but in part, and our faculties in this imperfect state are not large enough to comprehend these great truths in all their bearings. The light of glory will explain all: meanwhile we must submit our understandings to be taught of God, and be content to receive his word with the simplicity of little children.

Every doctrine which God has revealed is calculated to form some holy grace in the heart; and therefore the Christian character cannot be complete, if any part of divine truth be overlooked or denied. Besides, when men stand aloof from any truth whatever, when they forbear to examine it, they do not by this means leave their minds void of all impressions on the subject in question. Just views, which are the result of candid investigation and prayer, are indeed hereby prevented;

but prejudices are not shut out: these crowd in the more in proportion as men avoid patient enquiry; and those who refuse to contemplate an object in its just proportions, reduce themselves to the necessity of beholding a distorted image of it.

With no doctrine of Scripture has it fared so ill in this respect, as with that which is glanced at in my text. Those who will not be at the pains diligently to enquire what the Scripture really says on the subject, do nevertheless hear much that is said against it; and many misrepresentations they receive as true. Nor is it to be wondered, when they have formed a hideous visage, that they cannot regard it as the face of truth.

Let me, my brethren, deprecate this opposition of prejudice, in the consideration of the subject before us. If you have hitherto regarded it as harsh and gloomy, perhaps you may find that you had altogether mistaken it; perhaps you may see that it has no forbidding aspect; but that, on the contrary, it is encouraging and comfortable, and, in the highest degree, subservient to holiness of life.

I am fully aware of the delicate ground on which I tread, and prepared to advance with caution, and even with awe, to the consideration of the text. Let me beg you to unite with

me in imploring the divine presence; while, from this comprehensive passage, I endeavour to shew the dealings and the purposes of God towards the two great divisions of mankind, whom it characterizes, as—

Vessels of wrath. And,

Vessels of mercy.

I. The first thing which the text teaches us, respecting the vessels of wrath, is—the long-suffering with which God endures them, and this is very striking. The world abounds with iniquity; men are sinning on every side, in all possible ways; and sinning, too, against their own consciences, knowing that they are thereby offending God; and yet he is patient, though provoked every day. Now this is a part of our subject, which we see evidently before our eyes. We see how much men sin; and we see, too, how long God bears with them. And if they go on thus to the end, and die in their sins, it then appears that he has been all this while, and with all this long-suffering, enduring the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.

And, in too many instances, this is the mournful fact. The forbearance of God encourages men to sin the more. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore, the hearts of the children

of men are fully set in them to do evil. Thus the divine patience only tends to the aggravated ruin of multitudes of sinners. But *he* must be perverse, indeed, who judges of the character of God from the *event*, and not from the *tendency* of his dispensations. By his forbearance an opportunity is given men to repent; and many means of grace, and warnings of his providence, and calls to repentance, are afforded them; if they refuse to repent, the fault is with themselves, their ruin is on their own heads; and the long-suffering of God is a display of his *real character*, as gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

Nevertheless, divine patience has its limit. "The Spirit of God will not always strive with man." The season of mercy will pass away, and the day of vengeance will come. Then the wrath of God will be declared, and his power made known. Then every enemy will be subdued; and the wicked will be turned into hell, and cast into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels, where they will be tormented day and night, for ever and ever.

Thus much of this awful subject is totally unconnected with the doctrine of election; and is allowed by the adversaries, as well as by the advocates of that doctrine. Yet in this,

which is on all hands admitted, lies the main difficulty. A large proportion of God's creatures are by sin rendered eternally miserable. This fact is not disputed. I ask, then, would the painful feelings with which we must contemplate this dreadful end of millions of our fellow creatures, be at all relieved, if it were possible to exclude from it the fore-knowledge, and the power of God? If we could suppose that God did not foresee, or foreseeing, could not prevent this ruin, would any thing be gained by such a supposition? With respect to the creature, it makes no difference whatever. He is still miserable—eternally miserable. But with respect to the Creator, it makes a wide difference whether we suppose this misery to have broken into his works, by a surprise of which he was not aware, or a necessity which he could not control; or whether we suppose that it took place, because, for wise and holy reasons, he thought good to suffer that thus it should be. In one case, the misery remains, but there is no consoling circumstance to set against it: in the other, it remains, indeed, but remains as a mysterious part of a wise and holy plan, whereby, on the whole, the glory of God, and the good of his creation, are more abundantly promoted.

Do we conclude, then, that the divine counsels are not defeated; though there are wicked men who shall finally receive the due reward of their deeds? Can we *avoid* this conclusion? We can not—Yet here we stand on the brink of a great depth, which no human line can fathom. Let us feel our ignorance; nor venture presumptuously to say, "why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" Let us remember the apostle's reasonable admonition: "Nay; but O man who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed, say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, whom he had afore prepared unto glory." The exercise of mercy, the conferring of a favour, must, of course, be optional, at the pleasure of the giver; to be bestowed when, and upon whom he pleases. And this privilege the Most High claims; saying to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I

will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Still there remains, after this view of things, a lurking sentiment, that it is hard upon the sufferers. But this arises from men's mixing a thing which they do not understand, with one which they do understand. The counsels of God, the high and wise reasons which induced him to permit sin and suffering, we cannot comprehend. But we do comprehend that sin deserves punishment; and this truth is not at all affected by any thing, either revealed or secret, in the counsels of God. We are apt to think it is; and that if "it must needs be, that offences come," the woe against the man by whom they come, is less merited. But this is a delusion, and arises from our reasoning on what we do not understand; instead of attending to that which we not only *do understand*, but *of which we are sure*. We do understand that sin deserves punishment; nay, we are *sure* of it. We have the same evidence of it that we have of our existence—consciousness. We have a feeling of certainty in this case, which is beyond all proofs; a conviction which cannot be strengthened by reasonings. Guilt at once takes shame and suffering to itself as its due recompence, and instinctively seeks concealment. When, therefore, after

the last and awful day of retribution, God shall shew his wrath and make his power known in the eternal punishment of the vessels of wrath; he will inflict upon them nothing but what their own hearts will testify that they have deserved. The consciousness, that by sinning wilfully against light and knowledge, they have brought upon themselves this condemnation, will be in their bosoms the worm that never dies.

Such is the view which Scripture affords us of the dealings of God with the vessels of wrath: whence it appears that in his dispensations towards them there is much forbearance, perfect equity, and no wrong done to any of them, though their end be destruction.

It is very true, that if no more were given to any than is given to these, the whole human race would sin themselves into this gulf of perdition. But it has pleased God "by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he has chosen out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour." (Art. xvii.) Let us then as was in the second place proposed consider,

II. His dealings towards these vessels of mercy.

And here we cannot help observing a remarkable change in the language of the text. Of the vessels of wrath it was said, that they were "*fitted for destruction*;" but of the vessels of mercy, the expression used is, "*which he had afore prepared to glory.*" The fitness for wrath is of themselves; the preparation for glory of God alone.

To trace the methods of divine love, the successive stages by which the Lord brings his chosen to everlasting bliss, is a subject delightful indeed, but for which the tongue even of angels would not be sufficient. An outline of it however must be attempted.

And the first thing which I would observe is, that they are of the same origin and nature as the vessels of wrath. It is out of that base lump that the Lord takes them, in order to fashion them to so honourable a purpose. The considerations by which he is moved herein, are high above, out of our sight. But of this we are sure, that there cannot be with him any thing like what we call partiality, which is a blind preference. His reasons, whatever they are, must be wise and holy; and they issue in the everlasting salvation of those who are endued with so excellent a benefit.

To the actual enjoyment of this final salvation, they are brought through a series of

preparatory steps. As they are of the same original nature, so they discover at first the same character with other men. Being "by nature children of wrath, even as others," they have their conversation among the children of wrath, "in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." But God who is rich in mercy, of his great love wherewith he loved them even when they were dead in sins, quickens them together with Christ. He calls them "by his Spirit working in due season, and they through grace obey the calling." The opposition arising from pride and worldly lusts is overcome. They are made willing in the day of his power. Being given to Christ of the Father, they go to him, and believe in him for everlasting life. They consent to take up their cross: they learn to deny themselves, to crucify the *flesh* with the affections and lusts, and to confess Christ before men, not refusing to suffer reproach or loss when called to it for his sake. In short, they believe with the heart unto righteousness, and make confession with the mouth unto salvation. By faith in Jesus Christ they are justified freely. They are made the sons of God by adoption; and are conformed to the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ in

righteousness and true holiness. They walk religiously in good works, as being the workmanship of God, created anew in Christ Jesus to this very end, that they should be made like him in spirit and in conduct: and finally, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity. (See Art. xvii.) Thus the dealings of God, towards the vessels of mercy, display a gracious plan of wisdom and love, whereby he translates them from a state of guilt and wickedness, into a state of favour and holiness, and keeps them by his mighty power through faith unto salvation.

Having thus, my dear brethren, considered as briefly as its importance would admit, this great subject, I would call your attention to the practical conclusions to be drawn from it. And I hope to satisfy you, that the doctrine which has been delivered, presents no reasonable discouragement to any; while, to the children of God, it has a manifold use in promoting humility, holiness, and comfort.

When the subject we have been considering is ill understood, and ill applied, a sort of suspicion arises, that all efforts are vain, and that a man may take much pains for salvation to no purpose. Now this is a gross mistake. I know of no reasonable encouragement of which this doctrine deprives any man. You

who are yet at a distance from God, what encouragement would you wish to have? You would wish that the offer of pardon and salvation through Jesus Christ should be free to all; so that whoever will, may go and take of the water of life freely. It is so—Jesus Christ died for all. All are exhorted to repent and believe the gospel. If you refuse to do this, the fault is not with God, but with yourselves. He calls you to return from your evil way, that you may live. If you do so, you have life; if you do not, who is to blame?

Do you further say, that you not only wish the offer to be free to all; but moreover, to be assured that God is sincere in this offer; that he does not mock his creatures with a gift which he secretly determines they shall never accept, but that he has a benevolent pleasure in their salvation. It is so—and here it is remarkable, that the Lord foreseeing that men would perish in their sin; and that they would be apt, also, presumptuously to ask, why, seeing he could prevent them, he did not do it; foreseeing this, he has obviated the conclusion which they would be apt to draw, as if it were agreeable to him that they should perish. Against this conclusion he has protested in a manner so intelligible and so solemn, that every doubt, and every cavil, on

this head, must be silenced for ever. "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live—turn ye, turn ye from your evil way; for why will ye die?" God is Love; and, therefore, the misery of his creatures who perish in their sins can not be pleasing to him, though the manifestation of his justice may require it.

Still you say; as God means in the end to punish sinners eternally, you can not help looking upon all his dealings with them here, as parts of a plan of vengeance, not of mercy. How long, O man! wilt thou reply against God? How long wilt thou charge him foolishly, when his ways are equal, thine own ways unequal! Because in the end he will take vengeance; therefore, thou canst not see any thing of goodness or patience in his dealings with sinners; but rather these very things seem to thee parts of a system of severity. Suppose, now, thou hadst been cut off in the act of wilful and known sin, like Ananias, with a lie on his tongue; and hadst been at this moment in hell; wouldst thou not have thought this to be quick vengeance, and have wished that God had delayed to strike? He has delayed; and is not this patience and forbearance? Is it not better for thee to be here,

than to be in hell without hope? Yet it is very possible that thou mayest make thy condemnation heavier in consequence of this respite; and whose fault will that be? Let conscience answer.

The cause of all these vain reasonings is that which I have already mentioned—men will mix what they do not understand, with what they do understand. The counsels of God are a depth which we none of us can fathom; no wonder, therefore, that they cause confusion and perplexity, when we view through them his present dispensations towards the sons of men. Remember, what is *now* manifested, and what you are *now* to behold in the dealings of God with sinners, is his long-suffering patience, and that herein you have a display of his real character. Improve this season of patience, and flee from the wrath to come. If you do so, when the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God shall arrive, your then pure, happy, and benevolent spirit, will, in the light of glory, see that wrath in its true aspect; no cavils will then remain; you will admire, and adore, and ascribe glory to him, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things.

But do any, after all, draw a desponding conclusion from this doctrine, and think that

it is in vain for them to strive, if God has determined not to give them grace; that if they are not of the number of the elect, they can not be saved, let them do what they will. To them I say, that they are acting most *unreasonably*; that nothing but absolute certainty that their names were not in the book of life, could justify such a conclusion; and this certainty no man can have. Let them look to it, that they be not excusing, by this plea, their own sloth, and love of sin. At any rate, let them remember, that "for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall; whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation." (Art. xvii.) And let them ever bear in mind the golden observation, that "we must receive God's promises in such wise as they be *generally* set forth to us in Holy Scripture." (Art. xvii.) And how are they set forth in Scripture? Why, in the most *general* terms: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Ask, then, earnestly, seek diligently, knock perseveringly; and thus, instead of perplexing yourselves about God's secret will, follow that will of God which you have expressly declared unto you in his word, and you shall assuredly attain to everlasting salvation.

Thus, the imagination of discouragement, as an effect of this doctrine, arises from misconception and misapplication of it. On the other hand, the uses which flow from it to the children of God are manifold; particularly in promoting humility, holiness, and comfort.

What can more promote humility in the saints, than to know and feel, that through the grace of God they are what they are; that if he had not interposed, they would have gone on still in the ways of sin; that it is he who maketh them to differ; and that they have nothing which they have not received. These are truths which, when not merely held as opinions, but felt in the heart, cut up pride by the roots. Nothing is left for the creature to glory in; salvation is wholly of God; the man sees it to be so, and is prepared to ascribe it to him eternally.

Nor is the influence of this doctrine any thing less in promoting holiness; for it has an obvious tendency to lead men to distinct exercises of faith in Christ, and to impress them

with the necessity of going to him, and committing themselves into his hands, that he may, according to his promise, raise them up at the last day. It has an obvious tendency to lead men to do this, because when they know that all who are given to Christ of the Father will thus go to him, they cannot have any hope or comfort except so far as they see their salvation intrusted to his management. Unless they are living a life of faith in the Son, they can have no reason to conclude that the saving purposes of the Father are accomplished in them. And this gives a decisive character to their religion. It renders them holy and fruitful in good works. A self-sufficient religion, which springs from human resolutions, which is of him that willeth, and of him that runneth, and not of God that sheweth mercy, is always of a low standard. And I verily believe, that the half religion observable in many who make some profession of godliness, is the fruit of their not sufficiently entering into the doctrines of grace. Those pernicious opiates to the conscience, 'we hope we are sincere;' and 'we trust there is no harm in this, or no harm in that,' would be done away, if men's minds were fully possessed with the thought that they must have a religion, which will evidence their election of God. O, how

many canker worms would this destroy, which now prey upon the root of Christian profession, and cause the leaves and branches to fade and decay! Worldly conformity may stand with a self-righteous religion; but when a man remembers that he must walk so as to prove that he is not of the world, but that Jesus has chosen him out of the world, it must fall. He who is established in the truth, that salvation is from the electing love of God; and that he chooses men in Christ, in order that they should be "holy and without blame before him in love;" and "predestinates them to be conformed to the image of his Son;" can not be satisfied that he is in the way of salvation, till he finds the proof of his election of God in these very things. He judges favourably of his state, only so far as he finds in himself those fruits which are laid down as the effects and signs of election; so far as he can discover in himself the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope; and so far as the same mind is in him which was in Christ Jesus. Hence he is stimulated to labour after purity of heart, meekness, patience, brotherly love, deadness to the world, heavenly affections, and fruitfulness in every good word and work, that he may make his calling and election sure.

Thus favourable is the doctrine before us to humility and holiness: and it is not less so to comfort. For the man who is established in this truth sees God to be all in all: he views every thing as in his hand, and under his control. He has no idea of any thing being done without God. Hence, even in the worst times, in seasons of personal or domestic distress, or of public calamity, he possesses a stedfastness of mind; because he sees in every event, not the blind agency of chance or fate, but the wise and holy superintendence of a gracious Father. He knows that all things work together for good, to them that love God; and that he who has provided for them a kingdom, will take care of them while he conducts them to it. And with regard to his own eternal salvation, as far as he can discern in himself the evidences above-mentioned, he has a hope that God is with him; and that he who begun the good work will carry it on to the day of Christ. Thus "the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things; as well because

GEN. THEO. SEMINARY
LIBRARY

it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ; as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God." (Art. xvii.) Unspeakable comfort it may well be called. They who taste it possess a treasure which cannot be gotten for gold; neither shall silver be weighed for the price of it. May this blessing be yours, my dear brethren; may every truth of God's holy word come to you "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;" and may your humility, your holiness, and your comfort, mark you as the chosen people of God.

THE END.

46375 252H F286 V.2

Fawcett, J.

Sermons chiefly designed for the use of families. v.2

252H
F286
V.2

46375